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VENTURES PERILOUS

E.M. WILMOT-BUXTON

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BEING THE STORY OF THAT FAITHFUL AND COURAGEOUS PRIEST OF GOD, FATHER JOHN GERARD, S.J., WHO, AFTER A LIFE OF ADVENTURE AND MANY HAIRBREADTH ESCAPES, CAME AT LENGTH INTO A PLACE OF PEACE

BY

the dreeda
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"A BOOK OF ENGLISH MARTYRS," "JOAN OF ARC,"
"ANSELM," ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE

I DON'T know whether Harrison Ainsworth's *Tower of London* is as much read as it used to be. I don't know whether that is where boys nowadays are lucky enough to learn the fascination of royal processions and royal executions ; of torture chambers and fantastical escapes ; of intriguing ambassadors and splendid plotting lords ; of gigantic warders and strutting dwarfs and jovial cooks and the ghosts of queens. For that all boys have grown so old as to have outgrown all this I never will believe. Somewhere they must learn it, and then refresh their learning by *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Whether or no Ainsworth's book be all the way quite accurate—and in plenty of points (who denies it ?) it surely isn't !—and although the immortal opera doesn't, for one episode even, pretend to be, romance is in both book and opera ; romance is there, vivid and vigorous ; and when once romance has brought alive for us a Tower or a Windsor Castle, we shall never be quite poor-minded enough to dwell content in suburbs, however neat ; nor thin-souled enough to feel our best thrills in a music-hall, however noisy.

But we have the chance of a more rich and real romance than anything the novelist and librettist and composer have bequeathed to us. I say it in all

seriousness : no novel, no play, can come near the recital of those real happenings of some of which *Adventures Perilous* reminds us.

Father John Gerard didn't die a martyr ; still he was hanged for hours by the wrists, in the grinding agony of those iron gauntlets, till the sweat poured from his limbs, and the very jailers wept. (And yet, over those hands and wrists, too swollen now to pass through coat-sleeves, next day, again and yet again, those same iron gauntlets were rammed and he was left hanging by them.) And through it all, and through the desperate mood that came upon him with it, he still could pray and jest and answer boldly and shrewdly, and think tenderly for others.

And as for prisons, you have here a good choice of them : the Southwark Counter prison, the Marshalsea, the " Clink " (and that is a name at which a modern Tommy will open his eyes when he learns its history !) ; and the various strongholds of the Tower itself : and then, the secret communications between cells ; and the dangerous dealings with the outside world ; and the letters written in lemon juice, or, better, orange juice (for while lemon-juice writing shows up when steeped in water or held to fire, and then fades and again can be revived, orange-juice writing is washed out quite by water, though it fades no more once heat has made it legible) ; and the actual incredible escape from Tower into Thames.

And short of prisons, the secret rooms and hiding-

places : in chimneys, under stairs, refuges to which priests fled at mid-Mass or from broken sleep—keeping a presence of mind so perfect that once one of them took thought, actually, to *turn his mattress* and make his friends turn theirs, that *the cold side might be uppermost*, and that the invading pursuivant might at once conclude those beds had not been slept on !

These, and a hundred more things like them, are outside things, I very well know. And yet it is this element of gaiety, of laughter, of rapid enterprise and adventure, of sport, that I want to indicate. These priests, who could play at cards, “and play well, too,” as one great lady incredulously cried, who were as good with horse or dog or falcon as anybody, who took the whole household aback by the transformation of their whole personality once they appeared in vestments, and yet were their *own true selves* throughout, never coarse or complaisant in disguise, never hypocrites in their cassocks, who could ask a huntsman gaily : “Is there, do you think, no sport in holding the true Faith against a crowd of persecutions ? ” and could end a hard day’s riding by crying to the horseman at their side : “May you one day ride as bravely into the true Church as you have ridden to hounds to-day ! ”—don’t they answer perfectly to the definition which, we read, rose spontaneously to the most reluctant lips, of “very gallant gentlemen” ?

“Gentlemen” ! They certainly were that. And

it's a strange thing to notice—and no one can *but* notice it—how the bullying and the sneaking, and all that makes the *cad*, were, if not wholly, alas! upon “the other side,” at any rate in those in whom the Catholic flame was dying, if not yet dead. There are two boys, mentioned in this story of men whose spirits were as fresh and adventurous as any boy's, who funk'd, alas! and gave up, quite readily, when arrested, the lemon-juice letter they had used to wrap their collars in, and on which lives depended, and to deliver which they had promised. But then, as one of them half owned, they *were* no “sportsmen”; they just wished the days were over when they had “nobody that counts for anything” on their side. It's not *their* names, poor lads, that can be added to that roll of honour.

Nor am I suggesting that *all* who were on the “wrong side” were bullies and sneaks and cads. Even so late as Father Gerard's day the mass of our people, we may trust, were “decent folk,” and “white” men. Still, what bullying and treachery and degradation is to be found in this dramatic period of England's history is all, I venture to believe, with the apostate Catholic or with the Protestants in power. Assuredly when Catholicism goes, a glory goes with it from the name and notion of “gentleman”; or, when it does not, that is due to the survival of instincts nurtured and ideas fostered by that great Catholic tradition which more than anything else has formed the English race. And I will

dare to add this: that in the war—during which there have been so very many conversions sensationally similar to those of which we read in this book, and due to fierce conviction elicited not least by the spectacle of Catholic courage and the Catholic creed and practice in the very hour of blood and death—many of the most stalwart converts have been those precisely for whom a false religion had ceased to have value or meaning, but who had maintained, unimpaired, those splendid *natural* elements which helped to make the gallant gentlemen of whom our race has ever been, and still, God grant, may be, so rightly proud.

However, I must add one paragraph. The national apostasy under Elizabeth was very different from what Henry VIII. achieved. That gross bully was not without his cunning. He succeeded in making his action appear so purely political, so limited in its range, that the people at large did not really know their *religion* was being attacked at all. Clear-headed men, like More, saw it well enough, and died for their faith; cynical self-seekers like Cromwell saw it too, and sneered; but the mass of the people were, not indeed theological experts, but at least honest in belief and *untainted in imagination*, and by no means prepared to surrender their *Faith*. But by Elizabeth's time the *popular imagination* had in a thousand ways been tainted: the Catholic religion itself had been made to seem what it was not; lying myth and bogey-tale had been so subtly circulated

that religion itself could be frankly and successfully attacked. Unless the people at large had been taught to picture Catholicism awry, the tyrants might have trampled as they pleased, yet have triumphed no better than did the Cæsars.

Therefore it stands to reason that whoso would "convert England" must re-Catholicise her imagination. Let no one think lightly of imagination or even sentiment. No doubt we need admirable books of theology, orthodox, yet up to date; no doubt we want learned historical works—works of research, of analysis, and of interpretation. We have some of this and are getting more. But none of it will really capture *England*. She will be won when her imagination is. And romance will go far to do that; and *true* romance to do it legitimately. Mr Chesterton's *History of England* amazingly stimulates the constructive intelligence; but we want something even more concrete, even more coloured, more warm-blooded and personal. We want, then, stories, novels; Romance incarnate in romances. No part of our history should be left without its—we daren't say Homer—but its better than mere bard. We want authors who shall between them cover the whole ground and give life to names and places. Many have done this for the period of the religious revolution; some few have strayed beyond it; but we want, on a scale so large as to demand co-operation, a Catholic *Puck of Pook's Hill*; a work, for England, and of massive dimensions, and con-

tinuous design, and like Mr Belloc's *Eye-Witness*. We want to be shown the Roman period and the period of the invasions, and the world of Alfred and of Bede or Aldhelm ; then of the Norman, of Lanfranc and of Anselm ; of Becket, and then of the rising universities—yes, and the dreadful Georgian world where, after all, the romance of Catholicism still did survive ; the world of the Second Spring ; the true Catholic novel of the war—all that we want ; and, please God, this book will inspire more pens than one to give it all to us.

Meanwhile how much may not *Adventures Perilous* achieve, to cast romance for us over those Norfolk villages, and those old stone halls of Lancashire, and those Channel Ports, where so much was done and suffered by men and women for that Faith whose map is in the Catechism ; and to put us, literally, on our knees before those names sculptured on the wall of London's one authentic holy land, the Tower, till it and the Thames can never more, for us, be utterly disfigured, and we can make, undistracted altogether by roar of any traffic, our pilgrimage by Newgate, Holborn, Oxford Street, from Tower Hill to Tyburn.

C. C. MARTINDALE.

ADVENTURES PERILOUS

CHAPTER I

THE PERILOUS LANDING

A DARK and gloomy November night was closing in upon the stormy waters of the North Sea, when a fishing vessel, that had for some hours past been sailing up and down the coast of Norfolk in somewhat curious fashion, came to anchor off a point of land not far from the village of Bacton.

Upon the tiny deck a little group of men was gathered, talking in anxious undertones, while the skipper prepared to launch a boat. It was evident that some immediate danger was feared, for the discussion turned on the point as to whether it was safer for all four of them to land together or only two at a time.

"Remember," said one of them, "that we were warned before we left France that all this coast is closely watched, and that since the events of a few weeks ago feeling against our Society and Order runs very high. Perhaps it were safer to sail more to the north, where the country is less disturbed."

"Not so, Father," eagerly interposed his com-

panion, a tall, well-built young man wearing the dress of a wealthy squire or nobleman of that day. " 'Tis true we were told of risks, but you remember that we all agreed to take them. Now I know something of this Norfolk coast and of the folk who live here. Many I know, for a fact, to be among the staunchest Catholic families in England, and I am persuaded that if we land here we shall obtain such help and protection as may help us to carry on our work in the best possible fashion."

" I agree with Father Gerard," the third man said in gentle tones that formed a marked contrast to the impetuous and decided speech of the last speaker. " But since it would be a great pity if we all landed and were all taken together, I propose that he and I are put ashore as soon as may be, and that Father Bales and Father Beesly sail farther north, and land where it seemeth to them more convenient."

In this all were agreed, and accordingly they launched a little boat in which Father Oldcorne and his companion, Father Gerard, were quickly carried to the shore.

It was now quite dark, and in spite of their words of courage a deep sense of loneliness came over the two young priests as the last sound of the oars of the retreating boat died away.

It was but a little over two years since John Gerard, the younger of the two, had left his native land, and yet the distant college in Rome and even the coast of Flanders across the stormy waters of

the sea at their feet were far more home-like than the bleak shore upon which they stood. The very air they breathed seemed full of hostility and suspicion ; for it was but a few weeks since the appearance off the coast of the great Armada of Spain had roused the whole country to a panic fury ; and this had changed of late to a no less violent rage of resentment and revenge against those who were suspected to be in sympathy with the aims of his Catholic Majesty of Spain. With the lack of discrimination that distinguishes such blind anger, those who were looking around them for a target for their wrath found it in the members of a new religious Order, the first four of which had landed in England some eight years earlier. The appearance of these four Jesuits had been the signal for an outburst of Catholic fervour such as might well make the Protestant onlooker view the whole movement as something almost supernatural. John Gerard himself, as a boy of sixteen, living at home with his parents in Derbyshire, could well recall the amazing risks taken by Father Edmund Campion, their most noted preacher, his hairbreadth escapes, the crowds of eager converts made by him during his brief year of work, and the sensation caused by his noble death on Tyburn Tree.

Perhaps, indeed, his own eager adherence to the cause of the Jesuits may have been first roused by the impression made upon his boyish mind by the self-devotion and gay courage shown even in the faec

of martyrdom by that brave young priest. Enthusiasm for the Catholic Faith was, however, no way of safety in the days of Queen Elizabeth. The cry soon arose that while all Catholics were suspects, Jesuits were known to be traitors, whose sole aim was to restore the rule of a Catholic sovereign to England. Persecution ran high, and of the brave little band that followed those four pioneers to England, few escaped the fate that had fallen upon all save their leader, Father Parsons. A special Act of Parliament had since been drawn up against the Order and their converts, making it high treason to persuade anyone to become a Catholic or to embrace the true Faith. Upon all who should either say or hear Mass heavy fines and imprisonment were imposed, and everyone over the age of fifteen was forced to attend the Protestant church of the parish, on penalty of paying a fine of twenty pounds a month.

For a time this persecution had somewhat slackened, when once again England was roused to fresh fury against all Catholics by the disastrous attempt of Philip of Spain to avenge the murder of Mary Queen of Scots; and once again the Jesuits became the chief objects of resentment. Every coast-line was closely watched in order that they might be apprehended on first landing; and one can judge of the importance attached to such vigilance by a letter of this period, written; some three years before the landing of Gerard, to a certain Sir Nicholas

Bacon, a Justice of the Peace of the county of Norfolk :

“Forasmuch as is understood that sundry wicked persons . . . mean to come secretly into this Realm in covert sort with some purpose to achieve some great mischief . . . we have thought it very necessary your good regard be had in every port and other creek of the sea what persons shall seek to land. For which purpose we have made choice of you . . . to see what persons shall come in any vessel . . . and to suffer none to come on land until they be duly searched and examined for what purpose they do come. Wherefore let there be a watch set of some honest people of the towns next adjoining any port or creek, whom we would have appointed to watch these parts of the sea coast.”

All of which goes to show the very dangerous position of Father John Gerard and Father Oldcorne, of the Order of the Society of Jesus, when they landed on a lonely part of the Norfolk coast, not far from the village of Bacton, on that dark November night in the year of grace 1588.

The gloom that had covered their landing seemed likely to bar their further progress, for they tried in vain to find any kind of path that might lead to a hiding-place of comparative safety. Their first attempt led them directly to the courtyard of a house from whence at the sound of their footsteps

came the savage barking of a dog. A second effort brought them to a group of cottages in the windows of which lights were still twinkling and the owners evidently awake and alert.

Rain had commenced to fall with a steady rush, which soon drenched them to the skin, and Father Gerard, the taller and stronger of the two young priests, could feel the slight figure of his companion shaking from head to foot with cold and general misery. At the back of the big house where the dogs had made themselves heard he had noticed a small but dense wood, and thither he now led Father Oldcorne, whispering that they had best take shelter there for the night and defer the decision as to their future course till the dawn.

The wood was far too wet and cold to afford them any chance of sleep, though they were both by this time extremely weary. Huddled together under the dripping trees, and always mindful of the nearness of the house and its accusing dogs, they discussed in whispers their next move.

Both were anxious to reach London, where they hoped to get into touch with other members of the Society; but Father Oldcorne, the more prudent of the two, pointed out that the risk of travelling thither was doubled by their going together, and that if both were taken prisoner their mission in this country must come to an untimely end.

“Let one of us make for London,” said he, “and the other can meantime explore this part of the

country till he fall in with friends. We cannot be very far from Norwich, in the neighbourhood of which, you will remember, we were told by Father Parsons before we left France to look out for sympathy and support."

To this suggestion Father Gerard somewhat reluctantly agreed.

"But how shall we decide which of us goes to London?" said he.

"Let us cast lots like the Apostles of old," said the other.

Kneeling on the sodden earth, the two young priests offered an earnest prayer to God that he would direct them in this matter; then, just as the first grey streaks of dawn were piercing the dripping branches overhead, they cast lots.

And the lot fell to Father Oldcorne to leave the wood first and to proceed on the way to London.

So keen had been the heart of John Gerard for this part of the adventure that he felt more than a little downcast at this result, but this his brother priest was not to know.

"It is as well, Father," he insisted, "for I am country bred and can the better pass for the squire's son whose part I dress for. Now you are clad as a fisherman, and know well how to win the hearts of such folks; so you may haply be safe if you keep among the fishing villages that line this coast. Take then half the money we have in hand, and give me your blessing before you go. And may God give

us a merry meeting in London town before many weeks are passed ! ”

So they parted ; and Father Oldcorne, setting out at dawn towards a neighbouring town, fell in with some sailors who were about to travel to London.

“ Joining himself then to the aforesaid sailors,” said Father Gerard in later years, “ he knew how to combine the prudence of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove, and behaved himself in such a sort that though he did not conceal that the evil he saw in them was displeasing to him, yet evil as they were, he won their esteem, and by this means and the protection they unwittingly afforded he was enabled to reach London without molestation. For the watchers, who were in almost every town through which he passed, taking him to be one of the party, cared not to annoy those whose appearance and carriage distinguished them so completely from those for whom they were keeping watch.”

Of Father Oldcorne we shall hear again much later.

Meantime the real hero of this story still lay hidden in the wood, realising with a very lonely and heavy heart the loss of his companion.

With much impatience he awaited the hour when it would be safe for him to emerge and to enter upon his own path of peril ; and while he thus waits, let us glance for a moment at the past years of his boyhood and learn something further of a life that had already seen something of adventures perilous.

CHAPTER II

THE BOY JOHN

TWENTY-FOUR years before this story opens John Gerard, second son of Sir Thomas Gerard and Elizabeth his wife, was born in his father's country house at New Bryn, in Lancashire, on the 4th of November 1564.

His father, who in later years was to know the meaning of dire poverty, was in the early years of the reign of Elizabeth a rich squire, owning four country houses, at one of which, his mother's inheritance, Etwall, John was to pass most of the years of his boyhood.

It was at Etwall that his earliest adventures in connection with the Catholic Faith befell him.

Two miles from the estate, on the borders of Staffordshire, stood the grim walls of Tutbury, with in which, under the charge of the Earl of Shrewsbury, lay for three months that most fair and most unhappy lady, the captive Queen of Scots.

No doubt the little John, then not quite five years old, with his brother Tom, a year or two older, had often passed below the high grey walls, holding fast to the hand of his mother, and looking with interest and awe at the window at which a glimpse of a

beautiful face, a wave of a white hand, might perchance be seen. No doubt his childish enthusiasm had been stirred for the unfortunate lady whom Catholics believed to be their lawful Queen. He may even have heard, without fully understanding, the subdued talk of his father with two neighbours, Sir Thomas Stanley and Mr Francis Rolston, and have caught some hint of the fact that these three Catholic gentlemen were willing to take very considerable risks to set the Queen at liberty.

But Mary was not suffered to stay long in a part of the country so infested with Catholicism. After less than three months she was hurried away to safer quarters, and was not to return to Tutbury for another fifteen years; and it is possible that the immediate cause of her removal was some hint of a plot in which Sir Thomas Gerard was involved.

The ways of Elizabethan ministers and spies, however, worked slowly if surely; and it was not till two years after the Queen had disappeared from Tutbury that the blow fell upon those who had hoped to aid her cause. Racing into the house one day after a long gallop on his pony, John found the household in confusion, his father gone, his mother pale and tear-stained in the disordered study, and the servants talking in mysterious undertones in the passages and hall.

The sight of his brother looking normal and self-important was a distinct relief.

“What in the world has happened since I rode forth this morning?” asked the younger boy.

“You may well ask such a question. It was a mercy indeed that I did not accompany you on your mad gallop,” said Tom disapprovingly. “The house has been turned upside down, our father is haled to prison, and I am left head of the household in his stead.”

“But what has our father done?” cried the astonished John, ignoring for the moment what Tom evidently intended to be the most impressive feature of the information he had given.

“That is the very question both he and my mother put to the Commissioners,” replied Tom, “and I, slipping behind the curtains, listened with all my ears to their reply. First they talked a lot about the Queen of Scots, and when our father said that he had had no communication with her for two years; they said in a loud voice, and both together: ‘But she declares that you, with Sir Thomas Stanley and Mr Rolston, have been reconciled to the Pope of Rome.’ At that our mother rose up and said: ‘We have ever been of the Catholic Faith, nor have we ever sought to disguise the fact.’ But father got very wroth, and kept on saying: ‘’Tis but an excuse to clap me in prison with my neighbours. Her Majesty knows I am her true subject.’ But at that one of them laughed an ugly laugh and said: ‘Which Majesty?’ And then they took him away, leaving me to represent him at Etwall.”

“If it comes to that I am bigger than you, brother Tom,” jeered Johnny, half inclined at sight of his brother’s rather too obvious gratification at his suddenly acquired position to pick a quarrel with him. But at that moment his mother came quietly into the room, and at sight of her tear-stained face something very hard and choking came into the boy’s throat, as he rushed to her and clasped her in his rough embrace. “You’ve got me, mother, and Tom.”

And Lady Gerard, kissing the boy’s curly head, did not utter the question that was burdening her heart: “Yes, I have you now—but for how long?”

That question was soon to be answered. It was not the will of “Good Queen Bess” that Lady Gerard should control the upbringing of the two boys for a moment longer than she could help, and within a few weeks they were both taken from her charge and forced “to dwell among heretics under the roof of a stranger.” The curious thing about this arrangement is that the boys were allowed to have a Catholic tutor at the expense of their parents; so it looks as if it were rather a means of annoying Lady Gerard than the result of any strong feeling in favour of Protestantism.

So three dreary years passed away. Sorely did the mother miss the noise and racket of her two sturdy little sons in the strangely silent house, which the sober chatter of her three young daughters,

Mary, Dorothy and Martha, played such a small part in filling. Far away in his Tower cell poor Sir Thomas brooded and schemed for release ; and in dull and uncongenial surroundings the two boys pined for their parents and their ponies and their free country life.

At the end of those three years Sir Thomas Gerard, by the payment of a large sum of money, obtained his freedom and with it permission to have his young sons once more under his roof. But it was never quite the same again for any of them. The master of the house became subject to alternate fits of furious anger against the Protestant "spite" that had lost him three good years of life, and to storms of brooding resentment against a Government that could so mix up politics and religion as to punish him for his openly professed faith on a suspicion of disloyalty to the Queen.

The knowledge of his unhappy state of mind kept Lady Gerard in a state of constant anxiety, though she hid it as brave wives and mothers do. She dreaded the future, not only for him but for the children, whose paths were bound to lie along perilous ways if they kept true to the Faith. But most of all she dreaded lest they should ever fail in loyalty to their Church, as so many others had failed in those sad days, little knowing that one at least of her girls was to earn the proud title of a "notable recusant" in the days to come, and that the roughest and noisiest of her two boys was to become a most

stalwart confessor for the Faith—a martyr in will if not in deed.

Perhaps the boys seemed the least changed by their two years' exile, and yet the keen eyes of the mother could detect a difference. Tom Gerard at twelve years old began to exhibit a good deal of that worldly prudence for which he was notable in later years. He began to show indifference, and even dislike, for religious matters, and more than once expressed his surprise that men should think it worth while to quarrel as to where they went to church or what they professed to believe. And when certain strangers appeared at Etwall, strangers whose presence there was carefully concealed from the outside world, Tom would take great care not to be brought into contact with them. Indeed, one of the most bloodthirsty of the not infrequent fights that took place between the two brothers was occasioned by an ill-tempered remark of the elder, to the effect that he wished these priests would find some other game to play than to get honest folk into trouble.

John, on the other hand, though he said even less about his faith, showed a fiery enthusiasm and disregard of even common prudence in this connection. His great joy was to hear that a quietly dressed guest was in possession of the library, and that he must not be surprised if, at sound of a warning from the watchers, the stranger were to disappear behind the great

carved fireplace and vanish as though he had never existed.

That the house at Etwall became at this time a favourite meeting-place and refuge for priests in hiding is certain from a letter still to be read in the State papers of that day, written by the Governor of Tutbury Castle to Walsingham, Secretary of State, which thus describes that very part of the country :

“Surely, Sir, this is a perilous country, for men and women of all degrees are nearly all Papists. I need not tell you what an obstinate Papist Langford is, and Sir John Gerard is ill as he, which both do lurk here in their houses, the furthest not past four miles from this castle. Neither of them, nor their wives and families, come to the Church, nor yet have our common prayers or service said in their houses, but do nourish certain massing priests which do haunt their houses, where it is thought they have masses secretly, but so closely and cunningly used that it would be hard to take them. These surely be dangerous persons if they had power according to their will, and therefore should be looked unto. I would to God there were no more in this country, where there are very few good. It seemeth that the bishop of this diocese is not so diligent and careful of his charge as he ought to be, and therefore should be quickened and admonished from her Majesty to look better to his flock so that they may be induced

to come to the church according to the law, or else that they feel the smart of the same."

In those days, then, it was clear that Sir Thomas Gerard was as good a Catholic as any in the land, which makes his subsequent history all the more surprising.

As John Gerard grew older he began to take an active part in the affairs of the estate, both indoors and out. He was a big fellow for his age, and full of lively spirits and inventions which sometimes proved of real use to a hard-pressed priest in hiding. In the schoolroom, however, he was by no means such a favourite as the quiet, hard-working Tom, for he was always in rebellion against his studies, and much preferred the spice of adventure created by the arrival of a priest in disguise. Nothing filled him with greater delight than to be allowed to keep watch from some point of vantage and to give a swift alarm if the "poursuivant" was seen approaching the house while the priest was out of his hiding-place. And in the intervals between such distractions he escaped from the schoolroom whenever he dared, and made for the open air, where he learnt to sit a horse, train a falcon, join in the gossip of the stable and become a champion in the field sports of that day. Sometimes, indeed, Lady Gerard, who had set her heart upon one day seeing her Johnny a priest, grew anxious as she marked his keen enjoyment for all such things. She little guessed that

a knowledge of such matters was to serve the future Jesuit far better than any amount of learning would have done in the wonderful career that lay before him.

When John was twelve years of age, however, his book knowledge showed such an alarming number of gaps that his parents decided to try a new plan of education. He was sent to Douay College, which a year after his arrival was transferred to Rheims, and there he remained till he was about fifteen. On his return to England he and his brother Tom were sent to Exeter College, Oxford, where the boys worked under a tutor described by them in after years as "a good and learned man and a Catholic in mind and heart."

But the Oxford of those days was a hotbed of Protestantism and no place for Catholic undergraduates.

When Easter came round the lads were summoned to attend the Protestant service in the college chapel, and there to receive what the boys scornfully termed the "counterfeit sacrament." Neither of them obeyed, of course, but hot-headed John was so loud in his denunciation of the authorities who had had the presumption to try and insist on their appearance that the more prudent Thomas sent an urgent message to his father.

"If you do not remove us from this danger spot, and that at once," he wrote, "John will so contrive that we are both clapped into jail, and that in spite of all my efforts to keep the peace."

The good knight took the hint, and the boys were promptly recalled home in charge of their tutor, Mr Leutner. For the next two years he remained their teacher, and under the influence of Etwall atmosphere soon became a Catholic "in very deed and not merely in desire." Their Greek they learned from a certain Father Sutton, a pious priest to whom the occupation served as an occasion for dwelling in their house unmolested.

It was during these quiet years of home life that the first little band of Jesuits, under the leadership of Father Parsons, landed in England. Of these the most notable figure was Father Edmund Campion, an ardent young priest who spent himself and was spent without grudging in the cause of his Master. History has nothing definite to tell us as to any meeting between John Gerard and the future martyr, but that there was such a meeting we are fairly safe in conjecturing. We know that Father Campion did a wonderful work of conversion in the north of England, and we can see him, weary with a long and fatiguing journey, arriving one night at the house of Gerard, asking for shelter and concealment.

Soon after his arrival Tom slipped off to bed, and as Sir Thomas happened to be absent for a few days it fell to John's proud lot to guard and entertain the guest. Knowing her boy's shyness before his own people, Lady Gerard left the two together at the first opportunity, and so John found himself before long

in intimate conversation with that very perfect gentleman, the future martyr. To his sympathetic ear John found it easy to confide his hopes and fears for the future ; and as he listened spellbound to the story Father Campion had to tell, a story of daring zeal and passionate dévotion to the cause of Christ and His Church, the seed was sown that resulted in John Gerard becoming in later years a Jesuit.

“Good-bye, Father. I shall not forget!” was John’s significant remark after he had conducted the priest in safety to his next place of sojourn.

“God bless you, my son. I shall pray for you both in this world and the next,” replied Father Campion.

They never met again ; for in the spring of the martyr’s last year on earth John was sent to complete his education at Clermont College, Paris. He was then about seventeen years old, and it was apparently at this time that he definitely received the call of God to the Religious Life. He himself speaks of this event as having happened at Rheims, but as he wrote his own life very many years after these things happened, it may have been that his memory was sometimes at fault.

He tells us that he made the acquaintance, by God’s providence, “of a saintly young man who had been admitted into the Society at Rome. He gave me the details of his past life ; he told me how he had been educated in the household of God ; he taught me how good and wholesome a thing it was

for a man to bear the yoke from his youth. He taught me the method of mental prayer, for which exercise we were wont to meet together at stated hours, as we were not living in the college but in different lodgings in the town. It was there that I heard the call of God's infinite mercy and loving-kindness inviting me from the crooked ways of the world to the straight path, to the perfect following of Christ in His holy Society."

Much, however, was to happen before John Gerard could fulfil his vocation. At the end of his first year in Paris he fell dangerously ill. No doubt the small, insanitary lodging that was the lot of even the well-to-do student in those days was very ill suited to the country boy, accustomed to much fresh air and good, homely food. This illness intensified his desire to become a Jesuit as soon as possible, and directly he was strong enough he set off for Rouen to see Father Parsons, who in the autumn of 1581, owing to the uproar caused by the apprehension of Father Campion, had come over from England.

In the eager boy who came to him burning to enter an Order whose very name spelt torture and death, Father Parsons must have seen a second Edmund Campion. But he noted also the marks of delicacy left by his recent illness, and advised him to be in no great haste to enter, but first to return home "to recruit his health by breathing his native air," and also to dispose of such property as belonged to him, before taking the final step.

When John returned home, however, he found it a matter of great difficulty to make his hopes known to his parents. There had never been much sympathy between him and his father, and he could not help feeling that a certain coldness shown towards him by Sir Thomas was due to the attitude of his brother Tom. It had always been Tom's idea to treat his younger brother as a wild, scatter-brained sort of fellow, who had made poor use of his opportunities, and who was quite unnecessarily rash and headstrong in the matter of religious observances.

At one time this last characteristic would have earned the warmest approval of his father, whom in many ways John closely resembled ; but of late a great change had come over Sir Thomas Gerard.

Under the constant sting of the Protestant hornets he had become very restive and rebellious against his fate. Fines and confiscations had by this time deprived him of the greater part of his property, and it was only during the last few months, at the earnest representation of Tom, now the manager of his estate, that, in order to ensure some provision for his family, he had made over certain lands and houses to his sons.

In spite of all Tom's hints as to the unwisdom of giving John such a responsibility, Lady Gerard had seen to it that her second son had his fair share of such property. But now that he had come back hoping for funds to provide for his training at a Jesuit

college, he found he could only obtain them by disposing of some of this property; and to this he knew that his father and brother would be bitterly opposed.

It is easier sometimes to face imprisonment and even torture than the displeasure of one's own people, and John's courage failed him so completely in this matter that for a long time he did not dare to tell them of his future plans.

At last, one day when they were out hawking together, he told his secret to his favourite sister, Dorothy, and wise Dorothy advised him to lose no time in winning the approval of his mother.

"But she is worried enough about my father already," grumbled the boy. "I hate to add to her cares. I cannot face her tears, Dorothy. I would rather be sent to the Tower to-morrow than feel that I have brought more trouble into her life."

"You are wrong, Johnny, there," said the girl. "I am much mistaken if your news is not the best that our mother has known for many a year. She may shrink from the annoyance caused to our father in his present state of mind, but that she will count as nothing when she has a son a priest."

"Shall I tell my father first then?" said John, still in dread of the inevitable storm.

"No," said wise Dorothy. "Tell her first, and let her tell father when he is in the mood."

So the full force of the storm was broken, and the knowledge of his mother's loving approval went far

to compensate for the displeasure of his father. Even after this had somewhat passed away it took a long time to raise the required money from the impoverished estate, and it was at least a year before John was ready to start for Rome.

Nor was money the chief difficulty. It had become more and more difficult of late for Catholics to get a permit to leave the country, and now that the Gerard family were known everywhere as "notorious recusants," John began to realise that it was not the slightest use to apply for one.

So he determined to dispense with the Government licence, and to cross to France on his own responsibility.

From this time his real adventures began.

CHAPTER III

AN INTERLUDE OF PRISON

IN the March of the year 1584, when he bade farewell to his family at Etwall, John Gerard was between nineteen and twenty years of age, a tall, well-built young man, possessing a fund of daring and high spirits that was to stand him in good stead in future days.

His first attempt to leave England proved discouraging. In company with some few adventurous youths of his own sort he set sail from England in a fishing boat ; and immediately there arose a storm of great fury, which tossed their little craft about for five days and then drove them to take refuge in the port of Dover.

This was to put their heads directly into the lion's mouth, and they were all straightway arrested and dispatched under guard to London. When they appeared before the Queen's Privy Council most of the little band were promptly dispatched to prison ; but there happened to be some members of the Council who knew the family of Gerard, and were inclined to deal leniently with the boy as a first offender. It was recalled that he possessed an uncle by marriage, a sound Protestant, well fitted to deal

with headstrong youth, and it was suggested that he should be sent to him "to be kept in his custody and perverted."

From John's point of view nothing could have been less desirable. He was quite ready to face prison ; the prospect was indeed rather exciting than terrifying. But to become the prisoner of a relative who would not even take him seriously was very much harder to endure. In vain he declared himself a hardened Catholic, and vowed that nothing would induce him to attend a Protestant service of any kind. They only laughed at him, not unkindly, and dispatched him forthwith to his uncle's house.

But within three months this uncle appeared before those same authorities with a very long face indeed. His young charge had made existence in his quiet, well-ordered household well-nigh intolerable. He had shown open disrespect to his aunt because she had said something disparaging of the religion of her sister, the boy's mother. He had incited his young cousins to all manner of mischievous tricks, and had nearly killed the Protestant minister with fright by dressing up as a ghostly monk and haunting the village church after twilight, when the good man came to lock the building for the night. More than once he had been found guilty of letting a fierce hawk into the fowl-yard of the minister's wife, and when caught in the act would only laugh and maintain it was as permissible as to put such an one as himself in the midst of a Protestant crew. Worst of all, he

had steadily refused even to set his foot inside the church at service time, and when his uncle, a small and peaceable man, had threatened, at the instigation of his wife, to thrash him with a hunting-crop for disobedience, the big fellow had merely laughed in his face.

"I can do with him no longer, your worships," ended the piteous tale of John's misdeeds. The Commissioners were at a loss.

"He must either pray or pay," said they; but John would do neither.

He would not hear of his parents spending another penny upon him, and as to the former alternative, when his uncle was questioned as to how often he had attended the parish church, he was forced to confess that he could never bring him to do so.

It was, however, unthinkable that a mere lad should defy authority in this headlong fashion, and forthwith John was packed off, with a letter from the Council in his pouch, to the house of John Elmer, Protestant Bishop of London.

Here the good man, seated in his comfortable library, gave a kindly greeting to the big, smiling boy, and asked if he would discuss matters of religion with him.

"That," replied Master John demurely, "is quite unnecessary, since I have no doubts at all to trouble me."

"You must in that case remain here in custody," replied the Bishop more stiffly, and John presently

found himself prisoner in his bedchamber. Until night came this seemed a quite endurable form of incarceration, but with nightfall came the order that the Bishop's chaplain should bring his bed into the room and employ the hours of darkness in spiritual controversy.

At first John did his best to sleep throughout the discourse of this worthy ; but when the latter, waxing wroth at his indifference, and possibly irritable from his own loss of sleep, began to pour forth abuse and blasphemy against the Saints and Holy Church, John could no longer pretend to sleep, but arose to defend his Faith.

“And so,” he tells us, “almost the whole night was spent in disputing.”

Two nights spent in this manner were more than enough for the chaplain, and John was forthwith sent back to the Council, this time with a letter from the Bishop in his pouch. He went off with a light heart, for the Bishop had taken a very kind farewell of him, saying, as he gave him the document :

“This will prove, Mr Gerard, that I have greatly striven in your favour with the Council ; I have, indeed, high hopes that you may now be set at large.”

The curious thing about this letter was that no sooner had it been read than the members of the Council were filled with rage against John, and ordered him to be imprisoned “until he had learnt to be a loyal subject.” Within a short time he found

himself behind the barred gates of the Marshalsea Prison.

There he received a warm welcome from the forty-seven Catholics who had preceded him there, of whom seventeen were priests, some of them under sentence of death. They were a cheery set, and they did their best to make things as easy as possible for the young recruit who had joined their League of Honour.

John, for his part, was full of interest and excitement, and very proud to be admitted into the fellowship of men who had already suffered for their Faith. For the first two or three days he was inclined to think the matter rather a joke, and kept the whole of his ward amused and interested by the description of his encounter with his uncle and with the Bishop. But at the end of the first week he saw something that made him look at matters in another light. He was passing the open door of a cell when he saw a man attempting to carry down the passage that led to it a very heavy pail of water. The man was extremely pale, thin and bent, and was so heavily fettered that he could scarcely drag one leg after the other. Behind him a brutal turnkey was urging him on with repeated blows, which increased in weight and frequency as the man stumbled in his weakness and spilt some of the water on the stone floor. Ill treatment of the prisoners was not a very usual thing, especially as the jailers depended on the money gifts of their charges for the greater part of their wages ; but, in the midst of his horror and

surprise, what struck John most was the fact that the man uttered no word of complaint or remonstrance, but merely shuffled on in silent patience with his load. In a moment John had snatched it from his hand, and though the jailer was inclined to object, the boy's indignant look and words seemed to make him a trifle ashamed of himself. Very soon he found urgent need of his overseership in another part of the prison, and went off, leaving the cell unlocked. John promptly followed his victim thither and asked: "Why did that fellow treat you thus? He is civil enough to others."

"Yes," said the other wearily. "They, for the most part, have the wherewithal to buy his civility."

"But it is unlawful—why do you not complain?"

"It matters not; and I do not remember that my Master did so," was the quiet reply.

"Do you mean our Master Jesus Christ?" said the boy, awestruck.

"I do. And also I am proud to think I am worthy to suffer as my earthly master, now in heaven."

"And he was?"

"Father Edmund Campion," said the man in a firm, clear voice.

A wave of emotion surged within John's heart.

"I knew him too," he whispered. "I owe him more than I can tell."

The pale, worn face of Mark Leonard lit up with pleasure.

"We must be friends," he said, "as long as they

leave me here, which I think will not be long. The Marshalsea is too luxurious a prison for one whose crime was that he spoke openly in praise of that most gallant gentleman and blessed martyr. But what can they do to me? I have been his close companion and servant, and I have seen him die on Tyburn Tree. What have I to wish for save that they may hasten the time that will join me to him again in the world beyond the grave?"

"Is there no prospect of release then?" asked John, with sinking heart, as he thought of his own unfulfilled vocation, and all the work he meant to do for the Faith.

"For me, none, since I have no money and am well known as a friend and abettor of the Jesuits," said Leonard. "But for yourself, if you have friends and money, it is probably only a matter of time. They will take you before the courts twice a year and examine you as to your likelihood of conforming or paying a large fine."

"But cannot I use any influence I have to get your freedom?" asked the boy very earnestly, looking with reverence upon one who had been the martyr's friend.

But Leonard only smiled at him gently and said: "My freedom, methinks, will come to me by way of Bridewell, and that perhaps before very long."

It was but a week or two later that Mark Leonard disappeared from the Marshalsea and was taken to the far more rigorous prison of Bridewell. John,

being on the watch, was one of the few who saw him go, and who learnt his destination.

“Keep a brave heart! We shall meet again,” whispered the boy to his new friend, and was rewarded by an extraordinarily sweet smile of affection from the man who seemed already half in heaven. But that next meeting added years to John’s life.

There was a curious custom in those days that allowed the prisoners, after the usual attendance at the magistrates’ courts, to have leave to visit their friends in town, on giving their pledged word to return to the prison within a stated time. The fact that they were all bound under very heavy sureties prevented the pledge being often broken, and very few escapes were made in this way. On this particular occasion John Gerard, having obtained the desired permission, instead of seeking a few hours’ relief from the horrors of prison, turned his steps towards Bridewell, that “horrible dungeon,” to find out the fate of Mark Leonard.

It was not without some difficulty that John discovered him, for even those ruthless jailers were somewhat ashamed of the thing to which their handling had reduced a perfectly innocent man. He had been put to the tread-wheel till, in his weak condition, he had been reduced to a living skeleton, quite unable to stand upright or to use his limbs in any way; and John found him lying upon a heap of filthy straw, gasping for breath, and covered with vermin from head to foot.

But still he could smile at the horror-stricken face of his young friend, saying in his hoarse voice :

“Look not so sadly, friend John. I like better to see you with a joke in your mouth and a laugh in your eyes.”

“But how dare they treat us so ! It is the action of devils !”

“It does but bring us nearer to God ! Surely we owe them a good turn for that alone,” whispered the dying man.

Throwing himself on his knees by the heap of straw, John muttered low, as he wiped the pain-worn face : “Pray for me, Leonard, that when my time comes my courage may not fail.”

“It will not fail,” said Leonard calmly, with intense conviction, “nor will your life be asked of you till you have done a great work for the Faith in this land. And now, dear lad, farewell. We shall not meet again in this world.”

In spite of the cheering words of his friend, John returned to prison with a heavy heart, and passed some days in his cell in unwonted depression. But one day, as he sat looking up at the little patch of sky that was all he could see from his tiny window, he became aware of a persistent tapping on the wall of his cell. Laying his ear against the wall, he heard a low voice repeating again and again :

“Are you John Gerard ?”

“Yes ; but who are you ?” asked John in some surprise, for the last occupant of that cell had been

a common cut-throat, whose language, whenever he came across him in the passages, had befouled even that vile place.

“ I am a priest, Father William Thomson. I have heard of you outside, and am delighted to find that we are such close neighbours in my new quarters. I have been here before, but got off with a heavy fine. Now, however, my crime is that I have been taken in the act of saying Mass, and I shall not escape so easily. Meantime, with your help, I propose to repeat my offence upon the earliest opportunity. Tell me, are you prepared to take the risk ? ”

“ Try me, Father—that’s all I ask,” cried John, scarcely able to believe in his good fortune.

“ Well, don’t talk so loud or they will separate us still more effectually. At present, by the way, the barrier between us is not a very serious one. What have you on your side of the wall just where I am tapping ? ”

John examined closely. “ They are big, rough stones,” he reported, “ set in with mortar rather far apart. The mortar seems to be crumbling away, and the largest of the stones is by no means secure.”

At this he heard a low laugh on the other side. “ It is as I thought. It is not the first time that the occupants of the two cells have been in communication. Now listen carefully. On my side there is a half-door, which on your side has been built up. Take your knife and very carefully scoop out the

mortar from the big stone, keeping the pieces as unbroken as possible. Then remove the stone bodily."

This John did with no delay, and was delighted to find a fairly large hole revealed, through which he could just squeeze himself into the next cell.

At once he found himself in the embrace of a clean-shaven man with merry dark eyes and a face full of humour and character.

"Now we can talk at ease for at least an hour," cried Father William, "and having gained possession of the secret, can pass from one to another as we will. How long it seemed before I could attract your attention, and yet I felt sure that you were in that cell. What were you about that you took no notice of my signals?"

"I think I was sulking with Almighty God because He had shut me up here away from all the glorious chances that other fellows had," said the boy, with a blush. And at that Father William laughed again, and promised him all the chances of danger that his soul should desire.

The next step was to obtain the requisites for saying Mass, an altar-stone, bread and wine, the holy vessels and a particularly thin kind of silk vestment which could easily be folded and concealed. This was not so difficult as it might seem, for the prison was visited most days by sympathetic friends, who stood at the barred gates and were allowed to pass in food and clothes to the prisoners. Conversa-

tion, of course, was difficult, as a jailer was always present on such occasions, but Father William taught John to look for a secret sign, given by the crossing of two fingers, by which Catholics were to be recognised ; and requests for what was wanted could then be made in the midst of casual conversation.

Little by little all the requisites for celebrating Mass were acquired, together with books, relics and an Agnus Dei, in spite of the fact that it was a penal offence to possess them. Then the word that Mass would be celebrated very early in the morning, before it was light, was passed round to the other Catholics in the prison.

Perhaps in all his long and adventurous life nothing ever gave John Gerard quite such a thrill of delight as the serving of that first Mass in the Marshalsea. The darkness, the danger, the narrow space into which the tiny congregation was crowded, the care with which the door, the latch of which Father William had managed to slip back, had to be watched, all added to the intense joy in the Presence that made the cell the Holy of Holies for the short space of half-an-hour.

Each day this was repeated, and for some time all went well. Then one morning a new-comer joined the devout little throng, watched the proceedings with deep interest and behaved as a devout Catholic. An hour later this "false brother," a renegade from the Faith, had visited the authorities and betrayed the whole affair.

"What's to be done?" asked John of Father William, by means of a code of tapping that they had established in times of risk.

"Sit still and say nothing!" was the reply. Before long the cell was being searched by the angry governor and his satellites, and John had much ado to keep from laughing as he saw the dismay with which they discovered quantities of Catholic books and sacred objects, "enough to fill a cart," in their well-guarded cells.

But this raid by no means daunted the Catholics, and though they had now to show a little more caution, they quickly set about repairing their losses, and, with extra precautions, again had recourse to what John Gerard speaks of as "so great a consolation in our bonds."

Father William Thomson, indeed, soon went further. Many young people, not yet Catholics, had come into contact with him and been interested in his teaching before he had been captured, and these now began to visit him at the prison gates. Sometimes on various pretexts they gained admission to the prison, and in this way the work of instructing them went on apace. Confessions were heard in all sorts of odd corners, sometimes even through the bars of the prison gates, and in the same way converts were constantly being received into the Church.

In later days John Gerard could but smile when he heard of the lugubrious letter written at this time by the Bishop of London to the Council, in which he

says that he finds in the Marshalsea "that those wretched priests which, by her Majesty's lenity, live there, as it were in a college of caitiffs, do commonly say Mass within the prison and entice the youth of London unto them, to my great grief, and, as far as I can learn, do daily reconcile them."

In spite of these exciting and consoling events, however, prison life became more and more irksome to this big, active lad of twenty, and in the autumn of 1485 John put his pride in his pocket and gladly accepted the offer of parents, friends and relatives to obtain his release by "going surety" for him. No doubt some of his people had influence with the Council, and in October he was released on bond of £200 to return to the Marshalsea and report himself there every three months.

He left prison with the less reluctance that his beloved Father Thomson had lately been removed to Newgate, and he hurried northwards in great joy at being able to stretch his legs again. It was very good, too, to see his mother; but he was surprised at the change that had come over Sir Thomas Gerard, who now sided openly with his son Tom in condemning John's whole adventure as a mad escapade, and his wish to become a Jesuit as an unpractical dream. The boy soon grew more restive than ever. The pursuits of an ordinary country gentleman no longer appealed to him, and he spent much of his time with a certain gallant gentleman, named Anthony Babington, once a frequent visitor at the house, but

of late, since his father's change of mood, rarely to be seen there.

John soon guessed that Mr Babington was deeply involved in some plot concerning the release of the unhappy Mary of Scotland, but with this he was allowed to have nothing to do.

"We want you for other things, dear lad," Anthony Babington once said to him. "This business is bound to cost the heads of all those who have to do with it. Your head will be more useful to the Faith while it remains on your neck."

Meantime he acted as a good safety valve to the impatience of the young man, and listened attentively to his plans to escape from England. But to any attempt of this sort, which would involve his father as one of his sureties in financial ruin, Dame Gerard was utterly opposed, and John would not disregard her wishes in the matter.

In those days, indeed, the thought of his vocation sometimes seemed almost to vanish into thin air, so impossible did it seem that he would ever be able to fulfil it. He might even have grown content to settle down in the comfortable country home, free from peril for the time ; but in the following spring he received a fresh spur to devote his life to the cause of the Catholic Church.

On his way up to town, in order to report himself at the Marshalsea Prison, he found himself one of a large crowd that carried him along to Tyburn, at that time a pretty village on the outskirts of London.

There, on that sweet April day, he became a witness of the awful sufferings and glorious martyrdom of Father William Thomson, his friend and fellow-prisoner, of whom he had heard nothing of late, and who was now called upon to lay down his life for his priesthood on Tyburn Tree. As he stood upright on the cart and faced the multitude, his eye caught the horror-stricken gaze of the boy he had known so well in prison, and, raising his hand, he quickly made the sign of the cross in token of his blessing and pointed to the sky. The sight pierced the heart of John Gerard as with a sword, and from that day he never rested till he himself had set foot upon that road of martyrdom, whose end was to be attained by him in will but not in fact.

Hastening home again, he went to Anthony Babington and told him that he could wait no longer. By some means or other he must make his way to Rome in order to prepare for the priesthood; and yet, even as he spoke, the thought of the ruin he would bring upon his father was evidently tearing his heart to pieces. When he had finished his broken and incoherent tale Babington laid a hand upon his arm.

“Go, my boy,” he said, “and go with a free mind. I myself will stand as your bail in your father’s stead; and I will meet any demand that may be made if you are found to be missing after the appointed time for reporting yourself at the Marshalsea.”

Thus was the way made clear, and with a glad

heart John bade his family farewell and made his way by devious ways to the coast. It was not till some two months later, when he was safely at Rome, that he heard that his generous friend had lost his life on account of the discovery of the plot that he had set on foot for the release of Mary of Scotland, the rightful heir to the English throne.

On his way to the coast John had fallen in with a party of five other Catholics, also bent on escaping from their native land, and they told him that the chief difficulty was to escape the searcher at the port from which they hoped to embark.

While they were waiting about on the outskirts of Gravesend they were accosted one day by a man named Dodwell, who told them he was himself a Catholic, and that he was hoping to cross the next morning. "The thing to do," said he, "is to bribe Raindall, the searcher, beforehand, and you will find that no questions will be asked."

The young men hastily consulted together. "How are we to know that this fellow is to be trusted?" said one. "He may be leading us straight into the lion's mouth."

John Gerard, however, was all for taking the risk. "In what manner should we approach this man Raindall?" he asked, and Dodwell at once offered to arrange the matter for them. So they gave him their money and waited in some trepidation for the morrow.

All went well, however, for no questions were asked,

and they reached France in safety. There Dodwell suddenly disappeared, and from one or two things that he had let fall they began to suspect that he was in the habit of making a profitable income out of such transactions. Before they left Rome these suspicions were confirmed, for they heard on good authority that this fellow Dodwell was a renegade, who was selling his wares to the highest bidder. For when he found it would profit him better he did not hesitate to accuse his accomplice, Raindall, giving information "that he receiveth money of passengers, suffering them to pass without searching. And I myself," says he, "escaped twice in this manner, having the second time in my company . . . Sir John Gerard's second son."

But by the time this transaction was set down in the records, where it may still be read, John Gerard was well on his way to the Eternal City.

He reached Rome on the 5th of August 1586 and became a pupil at the English College in the following April. About the Christmas Embertide of the following year he was ordained priest. This was quick work, as was also his admission into the Society of Jesus on the Feast of the Assumption, nine months later; but the necessity of the times and the intense eagerness of the young priest to be sent on the English Mission were reasons good enough.

A month later the desire of his heart was fulfilled, and he, a fully equipped Jesuit priest, joyfully set his face towards England by way of Rheims.

CHAPTER IV

THE ADVENTURE AT NORWICH

It will be remembered that the first landing of Father John Gerard on his return to his native country had thrown him on the coast of Norfolk, where he lay in the midst of a dismal wood, impatiently awaiting the dawn of day.

By this time his clothes were very wet and dishevelled, but he arranged them as well as he could, consoling himself meantime by the reflection that their well-cut shabbiness suited very well the part he meant to play.

As soon as it was light enough he began to walk in a leisurely fashion along a road which took the opposite direction from that on which Father Oldcorne had been lost to view, and before long he heard the sound of voices and footsteps coming towards him. A little group of rustics going to their daily work on a neighbouring farm was approaching, and the sight of a soiled young gallant, whose morning toilet had evidently been omitted, filled them with keen interest.

Seeing this, Father Gerard at once began to gaze up into the neighbouring trees and hedges as though in search of something, and they, coming nearer,

began to discuss his appearance and conduct in somewhat doubtful tones.

“Whativer is he abaht?” they questioned in their broad Norfolk accent, and at this Father Gerard at once said in friendly tones :

“Good morrow to you, sirs. Do you happen by chance to have seen a stray falcon anywhere about this part, or heard the tinkling of her bells?”

“Naw, we hannot,” they replied, and at once began to gape about as though the missing bird might at any moment fall into their open mouths.

“Well, I suppose I must give her up. A good bird, too,” said Father John, adding casually : “Can you tell me the best road to take to Norwich, my friends?”

At this apparently innocent question they looked at one another and then at him, with obvious suspicion, and one of them said :

“How do you come to be in this part of the country, young sir, not knowing your way any more than a stranger hereabouts?”

“Aye, there’s many a queer folk landing about this coast,” remarked another, looking closely at John Gerard.

The latter laughed heartily. “I take my oath there are!” he said. “Queer folk, indeed, by all one hears! But I come from well the farther side of Norwich myself and have not been on this side of the country before. Hawking has apparently carried me far afield, and all night I have been wandering

about, hoping to recover that stray falcon of mine. Evidently I have completely lost my way."

At this they seemed to lay aside their suspicions, and expressing their regret that they could not direct him more explicitly, they pointed vaguely across country in a direction which they declared would presently bring him by a long road to Norwich.

So off went Father Gerard, a trifle uneasy at his subterfuge, but consoling himself by the reflection that Etwall, in very truth, lay on the farther side of Norwich, and that the country was indeed but too full of "lost falcons," whose souls he hoped to capture for the service of God.

He knew that the roads so near the coast were infested by watchers and therefore made his way across country, getting as far as he could from the shore. And whenever he saw men at work in the fields he went to them and asked them the same questions about the lost falcon, thus concealing his anxiety to keep out of the public roads and villages, where sentinels were posted, with power to examine every stranger. It was anxious work, for he had continually to double and return on his steps in order to avoid any appearance of flight; and to make things worse, it rained heavily all that day.

When it grew dusk he was still only about eight miles from the coast and completely vague as to where Norwich, his immediate destination, lay; he was, moreover, soaked to the skin and faint for want of food and rest.

So he determined to enter the next village inn he came across, and, while still playing the part of a gallant who had lost his bird and his road, to make a new and bold move.

It was not long before he found himself in the parlour of a small hostelry, where the hostess quickly placed an excellent meal before her weary young guest. Her husband seemed a surly sort of fellow, but his manner quickly changed to cordiality when Father Gerard asked if he had a pony in his stables that he would like to sell. For he was a poor man and badly in need of money at that time, and so was delighted to strike a bargain. The young priest slept well and safely under his roof that night, and set out next day, a bright Sunday morning, on his pony, along the highroad to Norwich.

It was a daring procedure, and he was not altogether surprised to find himself stopped by the watchers at the entrance of the very next village.

“Who are you, stranger, and whence do you come?”

Without the least embarrassment Father John replied calmly that he was in the service of a certain lord, who lived in a neighbouring county, that his falcon had flown away and that he was come to this part of the country to recover her, if perchance she should have been captured.

“That’s all very fine,” said they, “but you must go before the constable and beadle.”

“But beadle be in church at marnin’ prayer,” said one of them.

“Then come along with us to church, young sir,” said the one who had previously spoken.

There was nothing for it but to give way for the present, so Father John meekly followed them as far as the churchyard and then politely intimated that he would await the beadle there. It appeared, however, that this official was unwilling to interrupt his pious devotions, and sent word that the stranger was to come into church, where he would be interviewed when the service was at an end.

“Well, I prefer to await him here,” said Father John, pretending to stretch his long arms in a lazy yawn.

“No, no,” said the messenger, “you must go into church.”

“On the contrary, I shall stop here,” returned Gerard. “I don’t want to lose sight of my horse.”

At this the good man evidently suspected a slur upon his honesty, for he began to wax wroth.

“What !” said he, “you won’t dismount to go and hear the word of God ? I can only warn you that you will make no very favourable impression on the beadle. As to your horse, I myself will engage to get you a better one, if you are so anxious about him.”

“Go and tell him,” said the priest calmly, “that if he wants me, either he must come at once or I will wait here.”

The fussy little official bustled off with his re-

port and presently returned with a harassed-looking beadle in his train, followed by several members of the congregation, who were anxious to see the fun. Gerard could see that he was by no means in a good humour, but he smiled at him pleasantly and prepared to answer his numerous inquiries as best he might. After he had inquired closely as to who he was and whence he came, the beadle asked :

“Have you any letters on you ? ”

“Search me if you will,” replied John imperturbably, though awake to the fact that such a process would seal his fate.

At this the watcher began to whisper eagerly into the beadle’s ear, but the latter shook him off impatiently.

“I shall have to take you before a Justice of the Peace, young sir,” he said.

“Certainly, if you think it necessary,” replied John calmly. “Personally, however, I shall much regret the delay, as I am in a hurry to return to my master, who must wonder what in the world has become of me. I should be well pleased, therefore, and so would he, if you would allow me to ride upon my way.”

At this there was more eager whispering from the fussy little official, to which the beadle listened with ill-concealed annoyance; and Father John, meantime, made up his mind to a speedy introduction to gaol as the inevitable sequel of a visit to the magistrate.

To his infinite relief, however, the beadle, surveying his open and ingenuous face with more confidence in his expression, said: "Well, you look like an honest man. Go on, in God's name! I don't want to trouble you any more."

So Father John rode gladly on his way towards Norwich, and had scarce finished his heartfelt thanksgiving for so narrow an escape, when he saw, riding before him, a young man with a pack strapped to his saddle.

As he knew nothing of Norwich, and was anxious to avoid running straight into the lion's mouth again, he began to urge on his pony in order to try and overtake the young man and make inquiries of him as to how he might best enter the city. But the youth's steed was so much the better of the two that he could not overtake him on his slow and lazy little beast. After following him in this way for two or three miles it so happened that the young man dropped his pack, and so was obliged to dismount and pick it up. This gave the priest his chance, and he hastened forward with an offer of help in strapping it on again, which soon put them on friendly terms.

He found the man to be a country yokel, by no means suspicious, and quite ready to afford him any amount of useful information. He knew that the appearance of a stranger on a tired horse was bound to excite interest in Norwich, and being anxious not to ride farther than he need through a town that was probably full of watchers, he asked if there were a

good inn near the city gates. The lad at once told him of one on the further side of Norwich and advised him to go round the city rather than through the midst of it, since he might lose his way in the maze of streets.

This just suited Father Gerard, who hastened round the outskirts of the city to the further gate, known as the Brazen Doors, where he found his inn and gladly dismounted for some refreshment.

He was at this point much puzzled as to what his next step ought to be. He wanted to get into touch with some of the neighbouring Catholics as soon as possible, but he had not the least idea as to how this was to be done without at once bringing suspicion upon them and upon himself. He was pondering this question over his bread and cheese when there entered a man who seemed to be an acquaintance of the host and his wife.

With a long, close look at the quiet traveller in his chimney corner, the new-comer took a seat at the further end of the table and began to talk about some of the Catholic gentry who at that time were in Norwich prison. Disguising his interest as well as he could, Father Gerard listened with all his ears and could with difficulty conceal his startled glance when the man mentioned the name of one who had been a fellow-prisoner of his in the Marshalsea some five years before.

When the man had gone out he asked carelessly who he was.

“An honest fellow enough in most things,” answered mine host, “but, unfortunately, a Papist.”

“How came you to know that?” asked the priest.

“’Tis a well-known fact, sir,” replied the man.

“Why, he has for many years been kept a prisoner in the castle, not a stone’s-throw away. Many Catholic gentlemen are still confined there, and this one hath but lately been let out.”

“Has he given up his faith, then?” asked Gerard, to which came the quick reply:

“Not he, and not likely to, for he is as obstinate as are all that crew. He has been set free under an engagement to come back to prison when called for. He has some business with a gentleman in the castle and comes here pretty often on that account. He is across there now and will be back anon.”

Full of hope that he had found a friend and ally, Father Gerard awaited his return, and when he entered he went up to him as soon as he could without attracting attention, and asked to speak with him in private. To this the man readily agreed, and Gerard, after a moment’s hesitation as to whether he were not risking too much by trusting an unknown person so completely, plunged straight into his story.

“I have heard that you are a Catholic,” he said, “and for that reason I am about to trust you completely, for I too am of that faith. I am here by a sort of chance, but I want to get to London, and it would be a good deed worthy of a Catholic if you would introduce me to some safe and well-known

persons that I may be allowed to pass on by favour of their company. I have money for my expenses, so I shall be no burden to them."

To this the man replied, curtly enough: "I know of no one about to go to London."

"Could you then hire someone to accompany me?" asked the priest, somewhat daunted by his suspicious manner and glad that he had not told him of his first idea of staying in these parts.

"I will do my best," said he; "but, as a matter of fact, I think I know of a gentleman now in the town who would be able to help you better than I can. I will go and see if I can find him."

He then went out, leaving the priest inclined to think that he meant to return with a warrant for his arrest. But presently he was back again, with the same imperturbable expression, asking Father Gerard if he would care to accompany him.

"Come with me into this shop for a minute," said he, and as Gerard visibly hesitated at the prospect of a trap, he added: "The gentleman I mentioned has named this as our meeting-place."

With a hasty prayer for protection, the priest entered a dark little shop and was shown into an inner room, through the open door of which he presently saw that his acquaintance, whose name he had been told was Mr Robert Downes, was talking in confidential tones to a handsome, sunburnt Norfolk squire, who had just entered. It was soon apparent that the new-comer was scrutinising Father John's

appearance very carefully, while pretending still to talk to Downes. Suddenly he entered the room and spoke to Father Gerard.

"Perhaps you would like to come with us and see the Cathedral, sir," he said. "'Tis a famous building and no doubt unknown to you if you are a stranger in these parts."

"I shall be much pleased," said Father John, still in much doubt as to what line he had better take, and was in the act of following the two men from the house when he heard the significant word "priest" pass between them. For a moment his impulse was to bolt round the nearest corner, but he conquered his fear and, detaining his first acquaintance as they were about to enter the Cathedral, he asked the name of the new-comer.

"He is Mr Edward Yelverton of Grimston," replied Downes in much more friendly tones. "A Catholic gentleman of substance and position and one who will be a good friend to you if you are what we think."

At that moment Yelverton turned and caught his arm. "Tell me the truth, Father," he said eagerly. "You are a priest?"

"Why should you think so?"

"Your face—your bearing—oh, God grant it may be so. We need you sorely enough in these sad days. Tell me—are you not from Rome—or at least from Rheims?"

"I am a Jesuit priest from Rome, just landed on

this coast," said Gerard, and immediately the two men knelt in the empty cloister and begged his blessing.

"Come with me, Father," said Yelverton, almost beside himself with joy. "I will take you to the house of a personal friend, where you may have a change of clothes and a good horse, and then, after a night's rest, you shall accompany me to my own house at Grimston. But be careful when you arrive there, for my brother Charles, who lives with us, is a heretic, and so you must give him no reason to suspect your sacred calling."

This turned out to be a real difficulty, for Edward Yelverton, in his delight at having a priest beneath his roof, made so much of him that his brother Charles, a sporting young squire, began to look with considerable suspicion at the new-comer.

There was also living in the house a widowed sister, a Mrs Jane Lumner, who belonged to the Calvinist persuasion, and her woman's wit soon pierced the priest's disguise. But she made no attempt to betray him, and, indeed, took every opportunity to safeguard him.

Nor was Charles Yelverton long a menace to his safety, for Father John, by his witty talk, thorough knowledge of sports and country amusements, and keen interest in every kind of bird and beast, quickly won his liking and esteem, and he was as sorry as the rest when, after a stay of a few days, Father Gerard announced his intention of proceeding on his

way to London. He had begun to feel very strongly that he must see his superior, Father Garnet, before beginning any active work, and so he gladly accepted a good horse and servant from his regretful host, who said to him as he bade him farewell :

“ I would rather provide you with far more in order to keep you here, Father. And I do beg of you, when you have seen your superior, to get leave of him to return and begin your missionary work in this district. My house shall be your headquarters, and you may begin by converting my brother and my other sister, Grisel Woodhouse, with her heretic husband, Sir Philip. I will introduce you to the principal families of the country, amongst whom you may make many conversions.”

“ I will gladly do so, if Father Garnet approves,” replied Father Gerard, shaking him warmly by the hand, “ and I shall not cease to thank God, Who has raised up such a friend for me on the very second day I set foot upon an unknown shore.”

So he departed from Norfolk and reached London without further adventure.

CHAPTER V

THE WINNING OF SOULS

IT was not safe for any newly landed Jesuit to remain long in such a danger spot as London, and Father Gerard was only permitted to pay a very brief visit to his superior, Father Garnet. He learnt from him of Father Oldcorne's safe arrival, and gladly listened to advice given him by Father Southwell, the poet priest who was soon to lay down his life on the scaffold for his faith, as to the best way of making conversions. But before Christmas he was back in Norfolk, which was readily appointed to be his first hunting-ground for souls.

For the next eight months Grimston was to be his headquarters, and he now once more appeared there in the character of a gallant young gentleman of moderate means.

He found himself in right good company. Within a ten-mile radius were many Catholic families, such as the Cobbs of Sandringham, the Townshends of Rainham and, most interesting of all, the Walpoles of Anmer Hall, one of whom was to lay down his life as a martyr in days to come.

Most of these, it is true, "kept their church" to avoid imprisonment and fine, but they loathed the

new conditions of affairs, the English service, the Protestant parson, the bare communion table, the desecrated altar-stone. They longed intensely for the old state of things, for the Presence in the church, for Holy Communion, for the priest into whose ear they might whisper the tale of their sins. But they dared not put this longing into words, for scarcely a household existed without some Protestant relative or servant who might at any moment be moved to betray them to the authorities.

Among these families Father Gerard soon began to move very freely. They knew him as Mr Thomson, a friend of Squire Yelverton, but no doubt they soon suspected that he was something other than he seemed. True, his laugh was ever ready, his manner courtly, his enjoyment of a joke as keen as his eye for a horse or a hawk ; but at a blasphemous word or an obscene story his face would fall and there would come a flash into his dark eyes and a look that spoke disgust and condemnation as plain as any word. At times, too, he was grave and silent, lost in thought, and it was clear that he was by no means wholly occupied in purely worldly matters. There were whispers, conjectures wholesale, but in that part of the country, at least, not even the most bigoted anti-Catholic thought of betraying one whose strange power of attraction quickly made him a favourite whenever he appeared.

This remarkable gift of personal influence soon began to bear fruit. At Grimston Charles Yelverton,

the brother of his host, soon became his convert, and the two sisters, Jane Lumner and Grisel Woodhouse, quickly followed him. Later on Sir Philip Woodhouse, a very notable county magnate, was also received into the Church, as we shall see.

When Jane Lumner, who acted as housekeeper for her brother and was a lady of a humorous turn of mind, got to know Father Gerard well, she told him a curious story. She had begun life as a very strict Calvinist, a sect that holds decidedly narrow views as to the number of those who will be saved at the last. After she grew up she began to grow very anxious about the state of her soul, and so she sought advice from a certain Doctor Perne, who was supposed to be an authority on Calvinism, and who was also an intimate friend of her family.

“Tell me,” said Mrs Lumner to him, “what is the true faith whereby I may attain to heaven?”

Now the doctor knew her for a woman of tact and discretion and determined to speak what he knew to be the real truth.

“Never disclose,” said he, “what I am about to tell you. But since you ask me a serious question I will say to you this. You may *live*, if you please, in the religion professed by the Queen and her kingdom, for so you will live more at ease and free from all the vexations that Catholics have to undergo; but by no means *die* out of the Faith and Communion of the Catholic Church if you would save your soul.”

Perhaps Mrs Lumner was the less likely to follow

his miserable advice because she heard later on that this unhappy man, who knew the truth but would not act upon it, put off his own conversion till too late, for he dropped down dead one night on his way from dining with the Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury.

Lady Grisel Woodhouse had for some time been in sympathy with her brother's faith, and she quickly became a convert ; but her path to heaven was not to be an easy one. Her husband, Sir Philip, one of the most wealthy of Norfolk squires, was exceedingly indignant at her refusal to go to church with him, although he did not mind the visits of his brother-in-law, Edward Yelverton, and his friend, "Mr Thomson."

But he took care not to be convinced by anything the latter might say, lest, being converted, he should lose his great estates and position in the county. Now it happened, not long after her conversion, that Lady Woodhouse fell very ill and lay at the point of death. She sent to her brother, begging that Father Gerard might bring her the Last Sacraments, but he, knowing her husband's prejudice against all priests, but especially Jesuits, sent in place of Father Gerard an old priest of the days of Queen Mary, who was not exposed to the persecution that befell those ordained in the days of Elizabeth. Since she was supposed to be actually dying, Sir Philip allowed this old man to be admitted to her, and meantime, in company with Edward Yelverton and Mr Thomson, awaited the

final summons to her death-bed. Suddenly the doctor who was in attendance on the lady entered the room, crying in an agitated voice : " A miracle, gentlemen ! My lady has taken a turn for the better—the fever has left her and she lies in a quiet sleep. How to account for it I know not, but scarcely had the priest finished his ministrations than she turned on her side and slept like a babe. There is no need for me to stay longer with her, though at your pleasure I will return in a few hours."

" It is the effect of the Sacrament—I have known this happen before ! " exclaimed Father Gerard.

" If that is so," said the husband with deep emotion, " I will at once become a Catholic myself." Then turning to the man he knew as Mr Thomson he asked what steps he ought to take.

" You will have to be instructed," said the latter, " and the first thing is to prepare for Confession. But in this I can help you, as I can give you the same instruction that I myself received from priests in former days."

" But I want to be received this very night," said the impatient convert. " Go, Edward, and fetch the old priest who has anointed my wife."

" He has already gone," said his brother-in-law, " but never mind, I will promise to produce another priest for you when you are ready. Do you now listen to what Mr Thomson has to tell you and prepare yourself to make confession."

So till very late that night they talked together

in the library, until Father Gerard, being now sure of his good faith, left him in prayer, while he went, as he said, to fetch the priest. Going downstairs, he put on his cassock and returned so changed in appearance that Sir Philip, never dreaming of any such thing, was speechless with amazement.

“Was this necessary ? ” he gasped.

And the priest answered, with a smile : “It was indeed ; not so much to avoid danger as to cheat the devil and to snatch souls from his clutches.”

So the husband was gathered into the Church of his wife. But unfortunately the story of the Woodhouses, that began so fairly, has a dark and miserable ending. Sir Philip was not of the stuff that endures persecution to the end, and twelve years later we learn from a letter of Lady Woodhouse’s nephew, Charles Yelverton, that his aunt, “on account of the madness of her husband which very frequently broke out against Catholics had lately fallen from the Church.” A year later, in 1602, Lady Woodhouse had evidently repented of her lapse, for by the help of her brother she had managed to get her husband to agree to a Catholic tutor, one James Roper, for her son. Six years after this Father Gerard, in his Recollections, speaks of Lady Woodhouse as persevering in the Faith, though having endured much at the hands of heretics.” Probably Father Gerard himself had had something to do with recalling her to her duties after her brief lapse, but her husband had altogether fallen away.

If the effect of Father Gerard's personality was thus strong in the conversion of his elders, what must it have been in dealing with many ardent youths, whose starved young souls were longing for spiritual food, and whose eager, generous hearts were certain to be moved by the fearless courage and high sense of spiritual adventure that characterised the young priest ?

We know that at least ten young men of the best families of Norfolk and Suffolk were converted by him, and all of these, under his influence, left England and became Jesuits before the end of Elizabeth's reign. One of the most interesting of these families was that of the Walpoles of Anmer Hall, whose story must be read elsewhere, but, as far as it was connected with Father Gerard, it may find a mention here.

The Walpoles, an old Catholic family of Docketing and Anmer, consisted at this time of six sons and three daughters. The eldest, Henry Walpole, had been one of those who stood nearest to Father Campion on the day of his glorious martyrdom, and it was a splash of the blood of the martyr upon his doublet that led to the half-hearted young lawyer becoming an enthusiastic Jesuit priest. He, during the winter of 1684, an exile for his faith, was lying in a Flushing prison for the crime of ministering as a priest, and was suffering every sort of indignity and in imminent peril of death.

He left behind him in England five brothers, all,

with one exception, young men of character, strong-willed, ardent, eager to employ their energies in some great cause. But since they were Catholics, all careers were closed to them. Under the ban of the Government their father's property might at any time be seized, and they themselves, if they refused to take the oath, might be cast into prison.

Another brother, Richard Walpole, quickly followed Henry to Rome, and it is probable that three at any rate of the four left behind were more than ready to envy the lot of the exiles, while openly rebelling against the hard fate that drove them from a beloved home and country. Only the second lad, Geoffrey, seems to have been content to be lukewarm, indifferent to his lot and blind to the disadvantages, whether material or spiritual, over which his brothers groaned.

It was the youngest, Michael, a boy of eighteen, who first heard that a mysterious stranger, who, men whispered, might be a Jesuit in disguise, had arrived at Grimston. The news at once stirred the ardent imagination of a restless, discontented boy, inclined at one minute to curse the Faith that seemed so likely to blight the existence of his whole family, and at another to be full of scruples at his own inaction when he remembered the earnest pleading and firm convictions of his elder brother. Here, close at hand, was a man who was ready to lay down his life for what he believed to be right, and to face torture and death with a gay and fearless courage,

as though it were the high adventure he had always sought.

Already Father Gerard had been sought out by his cousin Edward—Edward, who had hitherto been prepared to pay his fine for absence from the Protestant service, but who had never been actually reconciled to the true Church since his whole family had fallen away some years before. But now Michael heard that he had made open profession of his faith, even though this drew upon him the fury of a father who kept him locked up at home more like a prisoner than a son.

Such a fate did nothing to daunt such a generous nature as Michael Walpole's. He went to see Father Gerard, and one interview settled him once and for all. Henceforth he was to be his most constant attendant and faithful friend, never long absent from his side until he himself became a Jesuit priest in 1593.

His brother Christopher, then an undergraduate at Cambridge, next fell under the spell. His was to be the wider graduate course of the Catholic Church, for he was the first of the younger Walpoles to enter the Society of Jesus. He died in Spain after fourteen years of devoted work.

There was yet one other lad, Thomas, next in age to Michael, who at this period was wasting time at home, with no particular gift or taste and no great enthusiasm for his religion. To him came the same choice—would he conform to the Established Church

or would he stand fast to the old Faith and become an outcast ? And even if he had no gift of faith, he could not withstand the example of his brothers, and this, together with the influence of Father Gerard, brought the young man also within the fold.

In the December of that year, 1589, there was only Geoffrey at Anmer to represent the Walpole family. Of the rest, Michael, Gerard's devoted pupil, had slipped across to Flushing without a licence, the moment he had the news of the peril in which his brother Henry stood ; and he did not rest till, in the following January, he had got together a ransom and obtained his release. Four years later Father Henry Walpole came back to England and laid down his life as a martyr for the Faith. Michael himself became a Jesuit two years before his brother's martyrdom, and after a life of adventurous work for the Church died in the last year of James I.

Richard, the third and the most learned and accomplished of the six boys, had been ordained priest at Rome in that same December, 1589, and joined the Jesuits the same year as his brother Michael.

The career of this man would make a romance of itself, and we can only touch upon the barest details here. When he had worked for some years in Spain he came into contact with a lying rascal named Squier, a renegade Catholic who, in revenge for the priest's plain speaking, tried, on his return to England, to bring an extraordinary accusation

against him. He declared that Father Richard had tried to get him to poison Queen Elizabeth by means of a poisoned ball, which he was to press upon the pommel of the Queen's saddle and so bring about her death. Fortunately the Jesuit was out of reach, and Squier's story, reacting against himself, brought the rascal to the gallows.

The story of his brother Thomas, who had been reconciled by the example of his brothers rather than by his own convictions, has one terrible stain upon it. He had left England in 1589 to take a commission in the English army, then under Sir William Stanley, in Flanders. Then he came across his brother Henry, with whom he kept more or less in touch for a time. At the end of the year 1593 he heard of his brother's intention to come to England, where, as Henry wistfully wrote to his superiors, he had heard that "Gerard doeth much good."

Finding that Lingen, another officer of Stanley's army, was going to accompany the young priest, Thomas determined to join their party, and in the course of the journey learnt from them many details of their plan of campaign in England.

On a drenching night of December the two brothers and their friend landed in the north of England, and being utterly ignorant of their whereabouts, they buried their papers in a hole near the shore for safety and made their way inland. Unfortunately they made the usual mistake of keeping together instead of separating at once, and so at Kelham, the first

village inn at which they stopped, they were apprehended and cast into prison.

When they were brought to trial Father Walpole and Lingen were absolutely dumb as to any details of their mission that would endanger the safety of others. But Thomas was made of different stuff. He would not risk his life either for the Faith or for the lives of others, and when Topcliffe, the "arch-fiend" of the persecutors, questioned him, "young Thomas," as Topcliffe called him, answered readily enough. He even accompanied the officers to the seashore and dug up the hidden packets of letters, and he identified and thus sent to the torture chamber a second priest who had just been arrested after landing.

Perhaps he hoped to save his brother by these betrayals, for he wrote Father Henry a long letter at this time, saying what he had done and urging him to follow his example. And an extra pang of bitterness must have been added to the lot of the martyr when he realised the crime of which his young brother had been guilty.

In this world it seemed indeed that Thomas was to reap much advantage from his shameful act. When he returned home to Anmer Hall he was given the full management of the estate by his poor old father, who never lifted his head again after hearing of the cruel martyrdom of his eldest son. The property was divided at his death between Geoffrey and Thomas, the only two laymen of the family.

Thomas was to have Anmer and afford a home for his mother in her lifetime.

Thus far this conversion must have seemed as though it were one of the failures of Father Gerard. But curiously enough we have historical proof that Thomas, who was to live long after his brothers had gone to their rest, atoned in the end for his bad beginning. This may have come about through the influence of his wife, for he married an ardent Catholic, who is mentioned in the "recusant list" as the "wife of Thomas Walpole, Gent., he at this time being a Conformist." Three years after the last of these notices, however, we find Thomas himself presented as a recusant, together with his wife, Thomasina. And thirty years later, almost at the end of the reign of Charles I., we find the old man, then about eighty years of age, still paying his fine for not attending church.

Strange people, these Walpoles! And the life story of almost any one of them would make a tale quite strange and striking enough to tell by itself. Out of the family of six sons four became Jesuits, and one of these a martyr; a fifth remained untouched apparently by grace; a sixth fell away, but made a good ending out of a bad beginning; and four of these men owed their conversion directly to the work of Father Gerard.

In the meantime, however, the satisfaction felt by the devoted young priest who had won their souls for God had been deeply embittered by a

personal experience connected with his own family.

In the same month that John Gerard had arrived at the English College in Rome, his father, Sir Thomas Gerard, had been again committed to the Tower on a charge of high treason. This charge may have been one of harbouring priests ; or it may have been a revival of the old accusation of having some connection with a plot to liberate Mary of Scotland.

When this sudden blow fell upon the old man, Lady Gerard was in no little anxiety for the effect it would have upon his faith. But at first it seemed to act as a tonic. He entered upon his imprisonment in a spirit not only of faith and confidence, but full of zeal for the conversion of others. For we read in a State paper of that year that "Sir Thomas Gerard's keeper, a very honest man of the lieutenant's, reported that divers of the lieutenant's men, who had the keeping of prisoners in the Tower, were by persuasion and otherwise fallen from our profession into Popery. And he affirmed that Sir Thomas Gerard had sundry times persuaded him to convert to their profession."

But prison walls make an ill outlook for a country squire accustomed to the open heath and to the breezy hills of the north, and when the test of loyalty and fortitude came poor old Sir Thomas fell away.

His fellow-prisoner happened to be the Earl of Arundel, the saintly Philip Howard, who had given up everything for the Faith to which, as a gay

young nobleman, he had been converted. One day there came to the prison a rumour that the Spanish Armada had actually sailed for England, and that on its arrival all Catholic prisoners would be put to death, by the orders of the Queen. On hearing this the Earl proposed to Sir Thomas Gerard, a priest named Bennet and a Mr Shelley that they should join in a prayer together against this fate.

The plan was given up almost at once, lest it should be misrepresented by the jailers to the authorities; but the mischief was already afoot. It was a matter of common knowledge that the Queen would be thankful for an excuse to bring the Earl to trial, and a report of his suggestion was at once carried to her secretary. Witnesses were called against the Earl and, incredible as it seems, both Gerard and the priest, Father Bennet, were ready to give false evidence against him for the sake of obtaining their own release.

“At the Earl’s arraignment,” says the record, “both Sir Thomas Gerard and Mr Bennet were brought in person to give witness against him, the one that he required a mass of the Holy Ghost to be said for the success of the Spaniards, the other that the prayer of twenty-four hours was directed to the same end.” This evidence was the cause of the condemnation of the Earl, and though the sentence was deferred as to its execution because of the uproar it might have caused, his six long years of close imprisonment and an end probably

hastened by poison, earned for Philip Howard the martyr's crown as surely as Tyburn Tree gained it for any of those who died there.

But what of those who had so falsely accused him ? We know that soon after the trial Father Bennet, the old priest, "fell into a grievous disease, whereof he died miserably, with great remorse and grief for what he had done." Perhaps, however, his lot was happier than that of the renegade knight, who returned to his home, disgraced in the eyes of all Catholics as one who had betrayed his friend. We learn that "he never prospered after that time, but sold and wasted a great part of his estate, lived a wild life, fell from the profession of the Catholic Faith, and so continued till a year before his death."

The awful news of his father's fall must have reached Father Gerard some months after he returned to England, for the Earl of Arundel was condemned in that same year. Filled with shame and grief, his son made several attempts to see him and to bring him to repentance, but the old man refused to hear him, and Father Gerard could do nothing but attempt to cheer his unhappy mother and sisters, who were overcome with shame at the disgrace that had fallen upon their household.

In the "recusant list" of the next year we find the name of Lady Gerard, but against her husband's there appears the grim note : "He hath made show of conformity in our country."

Alas ! this was but the beginning of his apostasy.

A year or two later we find him giving orders, presumably as a magistrate, that Nicholas Gerard, his own brother and a "constant professor of the Catholic Faith," should be "forcibly carried to the Protestant church."

"And what of Tom?" was the anxious question John Gerard asked of his mother during one of his hurried visits. To which she answered with the first dim smile he had seen upon her face for many a day:

"Tom has played the man over this. He will not accompany his father to the Protestant service, nor support him in any way in his opposition to the Church. And though he will not say much on our side, he is much in love with a sweet Catholic maid, who will, I think, keep him firm in the right path."

And sure enough, in the next year or two, we find him classed by the authorities as one who "though in some degree of conformity, yet is in general note of evil affection in religion, no communicant, and his wife a recusant."

A year before his death, in 1601, Sir Thomas Gerard was reconciled to the Church.

It was a year in which Father Gerard was in London and, for a wonder, at liberty. None knew of his visit to the silent, ruined home, where the shamed and degraded old man now lived alone with his brave, long-suffering wife, and none could guess at the agony of prayer on her part that brought him at last to his knees. If it was the happiness of Father Gerard to receive his father back into the

arms of his Mother Church, ever open for the repentant sinner, it must have been a brave consolation and reward for all he had himself suffered for the Faith since his father first fell away.

In a manner strange enough Father Gerard was himself to make reparation also for the sin of his father against the Earl of Arundel. When he was an old man he became the instrument, as we shall see later on, of the conversion of the Earl's grandson. It seemed as though Almighty God had permitted him thus to make amends for the hurt that Sir Thomas Gerard had brought upon the lad's ancestor and upon the Church.

CHAPTER VI

A PRIEST HUNT

It was not long after Sir Thomas Gerard had been released from prison that Father Gerard, in the hope of helping him to return to the right path, managed to pay a visit to the home of his childhood.

He had in the meantime been busier than ever. He had been staying at Losell with his young host and recent convert, Henry Drury, and there he had brought into the Church a crowd of converts, fathers and mothers, gallant young men, eager maidens.

From thence he had gone to Braddocks, in Essex, the home of a certain William Wiseman and his saintly and witty mother, and there he had been even more successful. "Great hope for the Catholic Faith in England," wrote Father Henry Walpole longingly from his place of exile when he heard of John Gerard's harvest of souls. "How I wish that I too might be there."

After about two years of this kind of work Father Gerard began to cast a wider net. And first of all he tried to do something to banish the shadow that still lay dark upon his own family.

So he arrived one night at Etwall with three young converts, all his devoted friends, who were received

with open arms by Lady Gerard. The visit, however, had a very sad side. The very presence of his son, the eager conversation of his friends about Catholic affairs and their obvious enthusiasm for their new-found faith were as gall and vinegar to their unwilling host. Before long he said impatiently to his wife : " Let them begone as soon as may be. I have suffered enough for such doings, and have no mind to see prison again for priest-harbouring. Besides, they trouble me with their talk. Bid them begone."

So the visit was cut short, and Father Gerard writes sadly in his diary : " I had to pass through my native place, and through the midst of my kindred and acquaintance ; but I could not do much good there, though there were many who professed themselves great friends of mine. I experienced, in fact, most fully that saying of Truth himself, that no prophet is received in his own country ; so that I felt little wish to linger among them."

From thence he went on to stay with his uncle, Nicholas Gerard, and on his arrival found him in his hunting coat and breeches, about to start on a stag hunt.

" Welcome, Father," said he eagerly, taking him aside from a crowd of friends. " Have you forgotten how to ride to hounds ? "

" Not I," said Father Gerard ; " but surely you don't expect me to accompany you just now ? "

" I do indeed. There is a man here who has

married a cousin of ours, and no man but you, I think, can win him to the true Faith. Come with us then, and get into touch with him as you ride along the course."

"But surely some other occasion would be more fit," demurred the priest.

"Not at all," replied his zealous kinsman. "Take the chance while you have it. You may never get so near him again."

"Give me a horse and I am ready," said Father Gerard.

It was really rather a wonderful hunt for souls. During the chase he joined company with this man, Francis Fenner, and presently, when the hounds were at fault and had ceased to give tongue, Father Gerard began to "follow his own chase and give tongue himself in good earnest." He began to speak of the pains men took in chasing a poor animal, and quickly turned the conversation to the need of gaining an everlasting kingdom, and the care and industry needed to gain it. "For truly," said he, with a smile, "the devil on his part never sleeps, but hunts after our souls as hounds after their prey."

"Are you a Catholic then?" asked Fenner uneasily.

"I rejoice to say that I am," said the priest, and added quickly: "I think that you too are not far from that faith."

"I am no heretic," said the man. "I go to this

new-fangled service of the State to save trouble and the harass of the fine."

"Yet you are ready enough to take trouble over this business of a hunt, nay, even to endure much discomfort in it," laughed Father Gerard, fastening his cloak against a heavy storm of rain and wind that had arisen. "Is there, do you think, no sport in holding the true Faith against a crowd of persecutions? Why, man, you are not so keen as yonder hounds, who will not be beaten back from the stag by the whips of the huntsmen."

To this Fenner said nothing, and the two rode on together in silence. But as Father Gerard was about to bid him farewell at the end of the day's work, Fenner took his hand and asked very earnestly if he might come and see him on the following day.

"With the greatest pleasure, dear fellow," answered Gerard; "and may you one day ride bravely into the true Church as you have ridden to hounds to-day."

Before the week was over Francis Fenner was received into the Church, of which he became a most enthusiastic member. It was some time before Father Gerard came across him again, but he heard of him as one who was always ready to take risks in the matter of supporting and harbouring priests, and at last, being in his neighbourhood, he went to call upon him. He was received with the utmost joy by his convert; and presently, as they sat together in Fenner's library, the latter said:

“I have lately had a very strange experience, Father, which I should like you to hear. I once went to visit a friend who was sick in bed. As I knew him to be an upright man and one under a delusion rather than in wilful error, I began to instruct him in the Faith, and I pressed him at the same time to look to his soul as his illness was dangerous. I at last prevailed with him, and was myself prevailed upon by the sick man to send for the priest to hear his confession.

“Accordingly, after instructing the invalid how meanwhile to stir up in himself sorrow for his sins and make ready for his confession, I went away. I went back to my own house to find a priest, but there was not one at home at the time, and I had some difficulty in finding one. In the meantime the sick man died, but evidently with a great desire for confession; for he repeatedly asked whether that friend of his—meaning myself—was coming who had promised to bring a physician with him, under which name priests often visit the sick. What followed seemed to show that his desire had stood him in good stead. Every night after his death there appeared to his wife, in her bed-chamber, a sort of light flickering through the air, and sometimes entering between the curtains. She was frightened, and ordered her maids to bring their beds within the room and stay with her. They, however, saw nothing—their mistress alone saw the appearance every night and was troubled at it.

“ At last she sent for me, disclosed the whole cause of her fear, and asked me to consult some learned man. I asked a priest’s advice, who answered that very probably this light meant that she should come to the light of faith. I returned with the answer and won her over.

“ The widow, on becoming a Catholic, had Mass said in the same room for a long time, but still the same light appeared every night.

“ This increased her trouble, so that the priest consulted other priests, and brought back an answer to the widow that probably her husband’s soul was on the way to heaven by reason of his true conversion of heart and contrition, accompanied with a desire of the sacrament, but still he stood in need of prayers to free him from his debts to God’s justice. He bade her therefore have Mass said for him thirty days, according to the old custom of the country. She took the advice and herself communicated several times for the same intention. The night after the last Mass had been celebrated in the room she saw three lights instead of one as before. Two of them seemed to hold and support the third between them. All three entered within the bed curtains, and after staying there a little while, mounted up towards heaven, through the top of the bed, leaving the lady in great consolation. Now what think you, Father, was the meaning of all that ? ”

“ I have no doubt,” said Father Gerard, who had listened with close attention to this story, “ that the

soul had then been freed from its pains and carried by the angels into glory.”

It was not long after Father Gerard had heard this strange ghost story that he set out to the house of a lady named Mistress Anne Vaux, a most ardent Catholic, who had offered her house in Warwickshire as a meeting-place, where Father Garnet, the Superior of the Jesuits, might meet some of the priests of his Society, together with a few laymen from the district.

Although he rejoiced to see his spiritual sons, Father Garnet was very anxious as to their safety ; for their numbers were larger than was at all prudent, and there were not enough hiding places to go round. During the conference he was careful to conceal his nervousness, but directly it was over he warned them earnestly of their danger and begged them not to linger without necessity, saying : “ I will not guarantee your safety any longer.”

So directly dinner was over most of them mounted their horses and rode off ; but five Jesuits and two secular priests who were of the company stayed behind, and after talking late into the night, betook themselves to the beds prepared for them.

Rising very early in the dark October morning, they went to the chapel, where, at five o'clock, Father Southwell was just beginning to say his Mass. The rest were at meditation when Father Gerard heard a bustle at the house door. A moment after, cries and oaths directed against the servant, who was evidently

refusing admittance to someone, were heard by all.

“Flee for your lives,” cried Father Gerard, who had looked from a window that commanded the front door. “I can see four pursuivants, with drawn swords, trying to break down the door and force a way in.”

Fortunately the servant, a big, strong fellow, was able to keep them at bay for a time, or they must all have been taken in the deadly crime of saying and assisting at Mass. In an incredibly short time Father Southwell had taken off his vestments and stripped the altar, while the rest hastily collected anything that was lying about that might have betrayed the presence of a priest.

“Don’t leave your boots and swords about,” cried Father Southwell, “or they will guess that there are many of us here, although none of us appear.”

Then Father Gerard remembered with dismay that their beds were still warm and showed evident signs of having been slept in. “Come along,” he cried, “let’s turn up the cold side of the beds that the rascals may be put off the scent.”

While they were doing this they could actually hear the replies of the servant to the shouting and bawling outside. “My mistress is not up—this is no time to expect her to meet you. She will be down ere long and will then give you her answer.”

And while he said this over and over again the priests were hurriedly stowing themselves away

with their baggage into a cleverly contrived hiding-place.

At last the "leopards," as Father John used to call them, were let in. They raged about the house, looking everywhere, and prying into the darkest corners with candles. For four hours they searched, while the priests in their hiding-place, which was an underground passage inside a double wall of the cellar, listened to their tappings and pokings with considerable interest. At last, in despair, they took themselves off.

Their hiding-place was by no means an ideal retreat, for the floor was covered with water; and though some of the older men found a dry footing on a little ledge, Father Gerard and Father Southwell were standing all the time with water up to their knees.

"Surely it is safe now to leave this den," said Father Gerard at last, but Father Garnet shook his head.

"When you have been in as many priest hunts as I have, my son," he said, "you will know that one of their favourite devices is to appear to leave the premises they have been searching, and then suddenly to return and catch their prey in the act of emerging. We shall do well to leave it all to Mistress Anne Vaux, and to stay where we are until she summons us."

After what seemed a very long time to the prisoners, Mistress Anne called down that all was safe, and

summoned, as Father Gerard said, "not one but many Daniels out of the lions' den."

After this narrow escape they delayed no longer in that place, but dispersed as quickly as possible on their different ways.

CHAPTER VII

THE WORK OF A TRAITOR

ABOUT the end of the year 1593 it became necessary for Father Gerard to get into close touch with certain Catholics in London, and for this purpose his good friend, Mr William Wiseman, began to look about for a convenient house in town to which both he and the priest might resort in time of need.

It so happened that such an abode, a white house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, was owned by a certain John Frank, who had been in the service of Mr Wiseman's brother. When the latter left England he recommended Frank to his brother, and though he was neither a Catholic nor a regular servant of the house, he very quickly won the affection and confidence of the whole household. Father Gerard himself trusted him as the others did, though he was careful never to let himself be seen as a priest by him, and he readily agreed when it was suggested that Frank's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields would form a convenient lodging for himself and his host when they went up to town.

But this John Frank was not only a traitor, but a very clever spy. He had quickly guessed by the deference that Wiseman paid his visitor that "Mr Thomson" was a priest, and at once began to watch

his movements most carefully all the time he was pretending to serve him. And he only suggested the use of his house in order to betray both him and the family who had so generously received and trusted him.

For this he had every opportunity, for he was constantly going to and fro between town and the house at North End, where old Mrs Wiseman and her son both lived, and where Father Gerard was a frequent visitor.

But fortunately Father Gerard had a servant of his own at this time—Richard Fulwood, or Little Richard, as his master affectionately used to call him in reference to his unusual height—who, with his brother, was ready to die if need be for the young priest, and who was always on the look-out to protect him from danger.

One day this man came privately to Father Gerard and said very earnestly: “Father, I entreat you to give up your plan of going to live in the house of John Frank.”

“Why? Do you know anything against him?” asked the priest.

“I can prove nothing,” was the answer, “and I would rather not say what I suspect. But I know of a house in Goldings Lane that will serve your purpose quite as well, and you will never regret the other.”

“Well, I will talk it over with Mr Wiseman,” said Father Gerard; but he added: “Remember, Richard, that Frank is a trusted servant of the family, and

you would have to bring very good reasons forward before Mr Wiseman would believe anything against him."

By this time it was well known that Father Gerard was a man marked down by the Government for capture, and already there was more than one bloodhound upon his scent. Towards the end of that year a miserable priest, then in prison for his faith, had tried to win his own freedom by offering to track down and betray the now notorious young Jesuit. But before his offer could be accepted the capture of Father Gerard had very nearly come about in another way.

The Widow Wiseman, as she was generally known, was one of those courageous souls who were ready to run any risk rather than give up the exercises of their religion. She kept in her house an old priest named Father Brewster, who on the morning of St Stephen's Day was about to say Mass in her little chapel when the alarm was given that the pursuivants were at hand.

A Christmas gathering of relations and friends was still staying in the house. This included the youngest son, Robert, a niece, the younger Mrs Wiseman and her daughter Mary, a Doctor and Mrs Cranedge, a few other friends, and three or four men-servants, fervent Catholics, who were all present in the chapel when the signal was given. But, as it happened, neither Father Gerard nor his servant Richard was in the house. There was no time even

to hide the altar vessels or the vestments. Robert Wiseman seized the bewildered and reluctant old priest and placed him almost by force within a tiny chamber made in the chimney of the great hall. Scarcely had he closed the sliding door than three or four shouting and bullying fellows entered the gate and were for a moment checked by the dignified figure and indignant expostulations of the white-haired mistress of the house. But in a few minutes the noise and confusion began again, while the men-servants stood by in sardonic silence and the maids cowered in the background.

“A pretty pass we are come to!” cried Mrs Wiseman when she could make her voice heard above the din. “May I not even hold a party of my own relations at Christmas time but that we are all hauled out of our beds at this hour of the morning to wait upon your pleasure?”

“You were already out of your beds for an unlawful purpose,” said one of the men, pointing to the vestments and vessels that were lying about the floor of the chapel. “All you can do now is to tell us where you have hidden your priest. We know that the man Gerard is somewhere here and you may as well give him up at once.”

“You are utterly mistaken,” said the old lady. “But I give you leave to find him if you are so sure about it.”

So the search began; but fortunately in vain, and the pursuivants had to be content with carrying

off the men of the party for further examination, and with making a recommendation to the authorities that some strong measures be taken against the Widow Wiseman, "for that her house is the only house of resort for these wicked persons."

For the present, however, she escaped imprisonment, and was able to send away Father Brewster in the darkness of the winter night to the safer and more roomy hiding-place at her son's house at Braddocks.

None of them had the least suspicion that this affair was due to the information given by the traitor Frank, who had hoped thus to win the reward offered for the capture of Father Gerard. For a time the informer, balked in his first attempt, lay low. Meantime Father Gerard during all the next year frequently visited the house at Goldings Lane, where he often slept, ate and made appointments with his friends and penitents. And here Frank knew he could most easily be taken.

It happened that the priest had made an arrangement on the Friday before Passion Sunday in that year to meet at the house his servant, Richard Fulwood, who, with his brother and two young men named Wallis, not only made the disguises that were so often necessary for the hunted priests, but helped in much of their work for souls.

On this particular Friday Father Gerard had visited Father Garnet, who, as he was about to depart, said

suddenly to him: "Long John, I wish you would stay the night here with me."

"Impossible, Father," he replied. "I have to be at Goldings Lane to keep an appointment with Dick Fulwood and the other trusty helpers there."

"Nevertheless I wish you would stay. Yes, if necessary I will make it a matter of obedience. I have no reason to give you, only a very strong feeling that this night you would be safer in my house."

Very reluctantly the priest obeyed, and before many hours were over he realised the truth of the old priest's foreboding.

For all London was in "hurly-burly" that night, owing to one of the sudden and causeless panics that arose from time to time against Catholics. A general search was made in all Catholic houses, and every stranger was seized and shut up in the churches till he could be examined next day. In the course of this search they came to the little house in Goldings Lane. Dick Fulwood was the first to hear their approach, and guessed that they were after Father Gerard, who he expected every moment would appear. With the idea of putting them off the scent, he hastily put on a suit of Father Gerard's lay clothes, and when they burst open the door was at once found, as he intended he should be, in the act of hiding in a cupboard under the stairs.

With a shout of joy they rushed upon him, making sure that he was the man they sought. They had got the description of the priest from Frank, but

Dick would have passed anywhere for a gentleman, and was not unlike the Father in build and appearance. Along with him they caught another fish, and no small one either. A certain John Bolt had been for some years living at the Court of the Queen, where he was in great request owing to his beautiful voice and skill in music. This young man happened to meet Father Gerard one day, and after much talk with him felt a strong wish to become a Catholic. One night he stole away from the Court and came to Father Gerard to be reconciled. The Queen, it is said, was so furious at his loss that she flung her slipper at the head of the master of music for not looking better after him. From that time he made his abode among Catholics as much as possible, and as he was always very popular, and a delightful companion, he was never at a loss for a home and protection.

This man, together with Dick Fulwood, his brother, "Lazy John," and two servants, Suffield and Tarbock, was arrested and brought before the Council to be examined. It was only owing to the influence of his many friends that John Bolt escaped the torture and managed to escape to Louvain, where he became a priest and master of music at St Monica's Convent till his death. The two Wallis brothers remained in hiding.

When they found that they had not got hold of Father Gerard, the magistrates determined to get up a case against Mr Wiseman on the charge

of harbouring priests at the house in Goldings Lane.

In this, however, they were balked, for the four men were absolutely loyal to their master, and would say nothing, even under threat of torture, to prove that the house belonged to Mr Wiseman.

Then the magistrates determined to catch the latter by a cruel trick. They sent him a message supposed to come from Father Gerard, asking that he would meet the latter at Goldings Lane. Knowing nothing of what had happened there, Wiseman went straight to the house on his arrival in London, in order to keep the appointment. Coming to the house, he knocked at the door, which was at once opened to him by two pursuivants, who had been left behind in the house, in order to watch for any Catholics that might come before all got scent of the danger. It was all over in a moment, and Mr Wiseman found himself a prisoner in their hands. He was at once brought before the magistrates.

“How many priests do you keep in your house?” they asked. “Who are they? When did you last see the man Gerard?”

“I cannot answer all your questions at once,” replied their prisoner. “Nor some of them at all. But I am ready to meet any accusation that you can bring against me on this head.”

As so far they had only arrested him on suspicion, they could not bring a formal charge against him; but there was no justice for Catholics in those days, and

Mr Wiseman found himself in prison without a trial, and cut off entirely from all his acquaintance, with one exception. The traitor Frank was allowed to visit him, and still pretended to be his most devoted servant.

Meantime the searchers in the house at Goldings Lane had made another discovery. In a secret hiding-place underneath the floor they found the brothers Wallis, who came forth laughing and joking, as though the whole matter were a good jest. They were at once hauled before the magistrates, where they showed a fearlessness that was oddly baffling to the authorities.

“Have you been present at Mass?” they asked, and the younger replied:

“Yes, indeed, whenever I get a chance! I dearly love a Mass, and have heard many, as well in Queen Mary’s time as in her present Majesty’s.”

“Be you a Seminarist or a Jesuit?” they asked suspiciously, to which he replied:

“Oh lord, no! I am not learned. I would to God I were worthy to carry their shoes.”

Seeing that he laughed and appeared to be very gay, they asked peevishly the reason. To which he answered that he was so glad that they had made a search that night when he happened by chance to be present, for now he had a chance of suffering something for his religion.

The brother of this brave little fellow was a Catholic at heart, though, being questioned, he said

he did not refuse to go to the "heretics' church." Both of them proved entirely loyal to the priest and to Mr Wiseman, and would say nothing against them, even under threat of torture.

Although they now had Dick Fulwood and Wiseman in their clutches, the authorities were by no means satisfied at the result of their raid on Goldings Lane. For the real criminal was still at large, and no doubt laughing at their disappointment.

Meantime Father Gerard, hearing that the house had been raided and his host thrown into prison, had gone to Braddocks to see Wiseman's wife and friends and to settle what had best be done for him. He had meant to stay there only a day or two and then to go into hiding at once ; but the desolate little household was most unwilling to let him go.

"Stay with us for Holy Week and Easter, Father," entreated Mrs Wiseman. "Think what it will mean for us with William in prison and we ourselves left without a chance of the Sacraments. We can hide you here, and if a message should come to you from my husband it is here it will come, and Frank will be the one to bring it."

"Well, I will gladly stay, my child," replied the priest, though he knew that the risk of staying in a suspected house was great.

Sure enough, about the middle of Holy Week John Frank appeared, with many protestations of grief at the fate that had overtaken his master, and two letters for "Mr Thomson." One of these was

from Wiseman, giving details of his examination and of all that had befallen him.

This letter, as a matter of fact, had been read by the magistrates, but they allowed it to pass in order that Frank might know for certain whether Father Gerard was in the house.

The second letter was from "Little Richard," and brought news of the utmost importance. For he told the priest that so far he and the rest had betrayed nothing, and that he was safe from having any definite charge brought against him. He went on to describe the filthy cell in which he lay, or rather sat, for there was no bed, and nothing but a little verminous straw upon the floor of stone. "However," he ended gaily, "I sit upon the window-sill and expect every day to be examined by torture, when I shall, no doubt, be warm enough."

Much moved, Father Gerard read part of this letter aloud in Frank's presence to Mrs Wiseman, and exclaimed at this point: "I wish I could bear some of his tortures for him, so that there might be less for him to endure."

These words were afterwards brought against him at his own trial, and gave the first proof that Frank had betrayed him, since he alone had heard them read to Mrs Wiseman.

During the next few days the priest lay hid at Braddocks in a cleverly contrived priest's hole. But on Easter Monday, after Mass had been said and confessions heard by him on the previous days, the traitor

Frank, who was still in the house, sent word to the magistrates that now was the time to trap their prey.

It was very early next day, when the little household was assembled in the chapel and Father Gerard was about to say Mass, that the sound of a tumult downstairs was heard. There was a start from Mrs Wiseman and a frightened cry from one of her two little girls, the younger of whom was only ten years old. This was hastily silenced, and while the chapel was quickly cleared, the lady beckoned the priest to the fireplace of an upper room and, taking up the floor of loose bricks and planks, showed him a hole just big enough for him to stand upright.

This hole, which had lately been made for the purpose, and was known to no one but the lady of the house, was partly below the chapel floor and partly below the boards of a large wainscoted room into which the chapel opened. Into this the priest sprang, and then Mrs Wiseman, after hurriedly giving him some biscuits and a little quince jelly, replaced the bricks and planks. Had he gone to his usual hiding-place he must, as we shall see, have been discovered quite soon ; as it was, he only just had time to conceal himself in the present hole.

Scarcely had the lady quitted the room and locked the door behind her than the searchers appeared in the passage. They broke open the door of the chapel and spread through the house with great noise and racket.

Their next step was to lock up the mistress of the

house with her two daughters, and the Catholic servants they kept locked up in separate rooms in one wing of the house. They then made a thorough search of the whole building, which was of a good size. They looked under the tiles of the roof, they examined the dark corners with the help of candles. Finding nothing, they began to break down certain places which they suspected. They measured the walls with long rods, so that if they did not tally they could pierce the part not accounted for. They sounded the walls and all the floors, to find out and break into any hollow places that there might be. Two days were spent quite fruitlessly in this manner.

At the end of the second day the two magistrates who were in charge decided that the priest must have gone away on Easter Day, and so they themselves departed, leaving the pursuivants to take Mrs Wiseman, the children, and all the Catholic servants, to London to be examined.

This was the real danger, for Mrs Wiseman knew that Father Gerard would never give himself up, and thus enable the family to be condemned to death on the charge of harbouring priests. And on the other hand she feared he would soon be starved to death in his retreat. To her relief she heard that some of the Protestant servants were to be left in charge of the house, and that Frank was to be one of them. And as she still believed him to be absolutely faithful, she hoped that he would be the means of freeing Father Gerard. She had noticed that

Frank had made a great show of eagerness in withstanding the searchers, and loath as she was to let anyone into the secret of the "priest's hole," she felt she must take the risk. So she sent for Frank and said to him: "Although I know that you are not a Catholic, Frank, I believe that you love Mr Thomson as much as we all do, and that you will do your best to save his life and freedom."

"You may depend upon me, madam," said Frank, with a low bow.

"Well, then," said she, "I want you, after we are gone, to go privately into the room next the chapel and call out the name of Mr Thomson twice or three times. Then speak, but not too loud, telling him that we have all been taken to prison, but that you are left to deliver him. He will then answer from behind the lath and plaster where he lies concealed."

"I will most faithfully carry out your directions, madam," said the fellow, and with that assurance she was obliged to depart.

And then a wonderful thing happened. If John Frank had at once carried out Mrs Wiseman's instructions, Father Gerard would certainly have answered his call and fallen at once into his hands. But apparently he still hoped to hide the fact of his treachery, and with the idea of keeping himself in the background, while at the same time he pulled all the ropes, he told the pursuivants what Mrs Wiseman had said, and left them to deal with the matter.

Directly they heard his news they sent for the magistrates, who had gone home and were by no means prepared to come back again. They insisted on having their night's rest, but very early in the morning they arrived again at Braddocks and renewed the search. Perhaps they did not altogether pin their faith to Frank, for they made no attempt to get him to call to the priest, but contented themselves with measuring and sounding everywhere much more carefully than before, especially in the chamber next the chapel. Finding nothing, however, they decided to strip off the wainscot of that room on the next day. While they did this they set guards in the rooms near to watch all night lest the priest should escape.

Meantime Father Gerard, who had now been shut up for three days, was getting rather desperate and uncommonly hungry. He could hear from his hiding-place the password that the captain of the band gave to his men, and for a minute or two he thought of using it as a means of getting away. But he soon found that two or three fellows were on guard in the chapel and were watching the room in which the fireplace was, so that they would certainly have seen him issue from his retreat. He could hear every word they said, and presently, to his dismay, they began to complain of the cold, and to propose that they should light a fire in the grate of the big room. The priest knew that the grate was so constructed that a fire could not be lit in it without

damaging the house and discovering the hole, although, as a blind, they made a point of keeping wood there as if it were meant for a fire.

He could hear the crackling of the faggot and the voices of the men as they sat around it, and it was not long before what he expected came to pass. The bricks, which had only wood underneath them, loosened in the heat and nearly fell out of their places as the wood gave way.

When they noticed this they began to probe the place with a stick, and finding that the bottom of the hearth was not of brick but of wood, they remarked that there must be something curious about it.

Apparently, however, they were weary with their long search, and by no means inclined in the absence of their leader to begin it all over again. So they decided to put off further examination till the next day.

Faint with hunger and almost hopeless of escape, Father Gerard put his whole remaining strength that night into a prayer that he might not be taken in that house. For he knew his capture would sign the death-warrant of his friends, and though he cared nothing for his own personal safety, he was full of anxiety on their behalf.

And then the miracle happened.

Next morning they renewed the search most carefully *in every room except that in which the two watchmen had made the fire.* It seemed as though Almighty God had blotted out all remembrance of the thing

from their minds. If they had made even a small attempt at a search there they must inevitably have found the priest, for the fire had burnt a great hole in his hiding-place, and had he not pressed close against the outer wall the hot cinders would have fallen upon him.

But they came there not at all, being convinced that they had got upon his track on the floor below, where as a matter of fact they did actually find his former hiding-hole. From his half-revealed lurking-place Father Gerard heard their cry of joy and also their shout of disappointment when all they found there was a goodly store of provisions. Even Frank seems to have been convinced that this was the "hole" mentioned by the mistress of the house, and now began to think that the priest must have escaped. They stuck to their purpose, however, of stripping off the wainscot of the room just below the place where the Father actually was, and at any moment might have hit upon his refuge. For he now stood in a recess made in the thick wall of the chimney, behind a finely carved and inlaid mantelpiece; and they could not well take down the carving without breaking it. This they would not have hesitated to do if they had thought it possible that he might be there, but they did not think there could be room there for a man to sit or stand.

For an hour Father Gerard heard nothing but tappings and scrapings in the distance, and was hoping that they would soon give up the search, when

suddenly he heard voices in the room above, where was the fireplace through which he had got into his hole. From the sounds it was evident that they were trying the chimney by putting a ladder up it, and climbing into it in order that they might sound it with their hammers.

“Now I am done!” said the priest to himself. “They have only to go downwards instead of upwards, and they are bound to come across me.”

By this time, however, he was so hungry and weary of his confinement that except for the danger to his friends he would almost have welcomed his pursuers. But remembering the Wisemans, he breathed another ardent prayer for protection and waited breathless.

Down the big chimney the voices came quite clearly to his ears.

“Might there not be a place here for a person to get down into the wall of the chimney below, by lifting up this hearth?” said one of them.

“No,” said the other. “You could not get down that way into the chimney underneath, but there might easily be an entrance at the back of this chimney.”

So saying, he gave the place a kick, and Father Gerard himself could hear the hollow sound of the hole where he was.

“But God, who set bounds to the sea, said also to their dogged obstinacy: ‘Thus far shalt thou go and no farther.’”

Incredible as it seems, the men noticed nothing

amiss, and at the end of the fourth day they left the house, declaring that the priest must have escaped. A few of the Protestant servants were left in charge, amongst whom was the traitor Frank ; but none of the former would have lifted a hand against " Mr Thomson," and the latter made no attempt to do anything more in the matter, reserving his forces for another time.

As for Father Gerard, he still knew nothing of Frank's treachery. So directly he felt it was safe he emerged, very hungry and dusty, from his hiding-place, and appeared in the highest spirits before the astonished servants as they sat at their midday meal. The voice of Frank was loudest among those who congratulated him on his escape, but even if he had thought it wise to send for the magistrates he knew it would be of no avail, for the priest only waited to have food before starting off again into a place of greater safety.

CHAPTER VIII

CAUGHT AT LAST

WHEN Father Gerard fled from Braddocks he was still in imminent danger of capture. Though he was not aware of the fact, the traitor Frank was still on the watch for his next movements, and the whole country-side round London was on the look-out for the "notorious Jesuit."

For a week or two he lay hidden in the priest's hole at no great distance, but he was not content to stay there longer. He knew that other friends of his were in much distress on his behalf, and he was anxious to get to London to reassure them. He was longing, too, to carry on his work for souls in that quarter, and for this he was still in need of a house of his own, where, as he hoped, he might carry out his intentions without being subject to suspicion. In order to obtain this he enlisted the services of a certain "Little John," a servant of Father Garnet, who had been the clever contriver of the hiding-place that had saved the priest's life at Braddocks.

This man, whose real name was Nicholas Owen, soon found a suitable house in town, and while it was being furnished took a lodging for them both in the house of the landlord. Only a very few of his

intimate friends were told of his whereabouts, for the priest hoped to use these first days in arranging his affairs, receiving letters from his acquaintances, and in writing to them words of comfort. But, of those who did know, the Wisemans, of course, came first, and they, being most eager to hear of his welfare, sent at once to inquire after him. And for their messenger they selected no other than the traitor Frank.

One evening Father Gerard had been spending some hours at the house of a lady who had lately been received into the Church, and when he prepared to depart both she and the friends who were with her besought him not to leave the house till morning, lest anything should befall him on the road. But he was expecting important letters and insisted on returning to his rooms.

As he reached the door of the house a dark figure which had evidently been on the look-out for him stepped forward.

"Who are you?" asked the priest, on the alert for mischief.

"Do not fear, sir," said a gentle voice. "It is only I, John Frank. I bring letters for you, sir, from Mr Wiseman."

"I am grateful to you, Frank," said the priest. "I have been very uneasy about your master and his family. Come away in and we will see if Little John cannot find you some bread and cheese and ale while I attend to this letter."

For an hour the man stayed there, eating, drinking

and chatting pleasantly to Little John, while Father Gerard read and wrote answers to the letters he had brought. It was about ten o'clock when he departed with the answer in his hand and the blessing of the priest in his ears ; and from thence he went straight to the magistrates with his information.

About midnight, when Father Gerard was sound asleep, and his servant sleeping in the same room, both were suddenly awakened by the sound of knocking on the outer door. The priest bade John hide the letter that had been brought him that evening under the ashes where the fire had been and then go back to bed. As they lay there listening the noise came nearer and nearer, and next minute there were shouts outside, and a loud bang upon the bedroom door. There was no other exit from the room, so Father Gerard bade Little John get up and open it to their unwelcome visitors. At once the room seemed to be full of armed men, amongst whom were two pursuivants who knew the priest quite well. Seeing that he was fairly caught at last, Father Gerard rose and dressed with a good grace, laughing and talking with them meantime. The one thing he feared was that he had been tracked from the house of his hostess on the previous evening, and that she would suffer on his account. From their excited talk, however, he soon saw that this was not the case, and for the first time a suspicion, that soon amounted to a certainty, crossed his mind that this was all due to the treachery of John Frank.

"So much the better!" he said to himself, and knowing that there was nothing in his luggage that could be used against his friends, he was perfectly happy and at ease.

He was taken first to the house of the pursuivant who claimed his acquaintance, and kept there while they questioned his servant. The first thing a prisoner always does is to examine the window, and when Father Gerard did this he found that it was not very far from the ground, and that it would be easy to let himself down from the window by tearing up the bed-clothes and making a rope of them.

Very cautiously he opened the window, but as he did so he heard a noise as of someone stirring in the next room. Evidently there was a watchman there, so the priest determined to get a good night's sleep and to take the first opportunity of the watchman's absence to make his escape. But Father Gerard had won too good a reputation for reckless courage to escape so easily. Next morning the officer appeared with irons, which he fixed upon the arms of the priest in such a way that his hands were kept wide apart. So he gave up all hope of escape and found himself in consequence with a curious sense of joy, since he had no longer anything to worry about, but had merely to wait upon the will of his Lord and Master.

Next day Father Gerard was brought before the Commissioners, the chief of whom was Sir Thomas Egerton, who had once been a Catholic, but who had

given up his Faith for the sake of the good things of this world. They asked him his name and profession, and the priest, as was the custom, gave the name by which he had been generally known in England.

"You had better tell the truth," said Sir Thomas, with a sneer. "We happen to know that you are the Jesuit, John Gerard."

"I will not deny it," said Gerard, with a smile. "I am, though most unworthy of that honour, a priest of the Society of Jesus."

"Who sent you into England?"

"The superiors of the Society."

"To what end?"

"To bring back stray souls to their Creator."

"No, no," said they; "you were sent on matters of State, to lure people from the obedience of the Queen to the obedience of the Pope."

"As for matters of State," replied Father Gerard, "we are forbidden to have anything to say to them, as they do not belong to our Institution. This prohibition applies to all the members of the Society, but it is especially enjoined on us missionaries. As for the obedience due to the Queen and the Pope, each is to be obeyed in that wherein they have jurisdiction; and one obedience does not clash with the other, as England and all other Christian realms have hitherto experienced."

"How long have you been doing duty as a priest in this country?"

"About six years."

“How and where did you land, and where have you lived since your landing?”

“I cannot in conscience answer any of these questions,” replied Father Gerard, “especially the last, as it would bring mischief upon others; so I crave pardon for not satisfying your wishes.”

“Nay,” said they, “it is just on these heads that we chiefly desire you to satisfy us, and we bid you in the Queen’s name to do so.”

“I honour the Queen,” was the reply, “and will obey her and you in all things that are lawful; but here you must hold me excused. For were I to mention any person or place where I have been lodged, the innocent would have to suffer, according to your laws, for the kind service they have done me. Such behaviour on my part would be against all justice or charity, and therefore I will never be guilty of it.”

“You shall do so by force if not by good will.”

“I hope by the grace of God that it may not be as you say,” replied the priest firmly, “but I beg you now to take this as my answer, that neither now nor at any other time will I disclose what you now demand of me.”

Upon this Father Gerard was at once committed to the Counter Prison, which in those days formed a part of the parish church of St Margaret’s in Southwark. His fearless bearing, however, seems to have impressed the renegade Sir Thomas Egerton, for though he declared that he must be kept in close

confinement, as being guilty of high treason, he ordered the gaolers to treat him well on account of his birth. This recommendation had very small effect, for Father Gerard found himself lodged in a foul-smelling garret, wherein there was nothing but a bed, and no room to stand up straight except just where the bed was. The door, indeed, was so low, and the priest so tall, that he had to enter on his knees, and even then he was forced to stoop.

A few days passed in wonderful tranquillity and peace in that miserable spot, and then the priest was taken to the house of a magistrate named Young, who was in control of all the searches and persecutions of the Catholics in London. Beyond affording him a brief but courteous greeting, Father Gerard paid him but small attention, since he was far more interested in the appearance of the man who stood at his side.

This was a tall thin fellow, with a grey and gloomy face, and small cruel eyes that peered out of bushy eyebrows. It was evident that Mr Young was ill at ease in his presence, for he kept edging away from his neighbourhood and seemed unwilling even to speak a word.

Fascinated by the way in which the other kept his eyes riveted upon his face, the priest whispered to his gaoler: "Who is that man with the long grey face who watches me so attentively?"

"That," said the gaoler, "is Topcliffe, the torturer."

The name was well known to all the Catholics in England, for this man had earned a reputation not only for appalling moral wickedness, but for the fiendish cleverness with which he trapped unwary priests. Cruelty was his delight and the groans and contortions of his victims his chief source of pleasure.

Presently the grim silence was broken by Young, who asked Father Gerard his place of abode and what Catholics he knew, to which the priest replied by an absolute refusal to make any such disclosures.

"I told you how you would find him," he said, turning in despair to Topcliffe.

The expert in torture turned his awful frown upon the young priest, who replied with the brightest smile he could muster.

"Do you know me?" he asked in a harsh and terrible voice. "I am Topcliffe, of whom I doubt not you have often heard."

So saying, he clashed his heavy sword upon the table near his hand, as though appealing to force in concrete form.

But Father John, no whit abashed, replied cheerfully :

"Yes, indeed, I know you but too well. But that makes no manner of difference to the answer I have given your friend."

Topcliffe then tried to bully him, but finding that Father Gerard gave back as good as he got, he took out a pen and wrote something on a sheet of paper.

"Here," said he, "read this paper. I shall show

it to the Privy Council, that they may see what a traitor you are to the realm, and how manifestly guilty you are."

This paper ran as follows :—" The person examined was sent by the Pope and the Jesuit Parsons, and coming through Belgium had interviews there with the Jesuit Holt and Sir William Stanley. Thence he came into England on a political errand, to beguile the Queen's subjects, and to lure them from their allegiance to their sovereign. If, therefore, he will not disclose the persons and places where he has lived, it is presumed that he hath done much mischief to the State."

Directly Father Gerard read this malicious document he saw that so many falsehoods could not be met with a single denial, so he replied that he wished to answer in writing.

"Oho!" cried Topcliffe. "Now you are beginning to talk reason."

This was just what the miscreant hoped, for he wanted to see his handwriting, so that some of the papers found in the houses of Catholics might be proved to be his. But Father Gerard wrote in a feigned hand :

"I was sent by my superiors. I never was in Belgium. I have not seen Father Holt since the time I left Rome. I have not seen Sir William Stanley since he left England with the Earl of Leicester. I am forbidden to meddle with matters of State : I have never done and never will do so.

I have tried to bring back souls to the knowledge and love of their Creator, and to make them show obedience to the laws of God and man ; and I hold this last point to be a matter of conscience. I humbly crave that my refusal to answer anything concerning the persons I know may not be set down to contempt of authority, seeing that the commandment of God forces me to follow this course, and to act otherwise would be against charity and justice."

As he wrote this open and manly declaration, Topcliffe pushed his haggard grey face over his shoulder and, seeing what he had said, shook with passion and tried to snatch the paper from him.

"If you don't want me to write the truth," said Father Gerard, "I'll not write at all."

"Nay," said he, "write what I say and I'll copy out what you have written."

"I shall write what I please, not what you please," replied the priest haughtily. "Show what I have written to the Council, for I shall add nothing but my name."

This he took care to sign so near the writing that nothing could be added in between. At this the rage of Topcliffe knew no bounds.

"I'll get you into my power and hang you in the air and show you no mercy," he roared. "And then we shall see what God will rescue you out of my hands."

His blasphemy only increased the self-confidence of the priest by filling him with contempt for such a

pitiful adversary, and he answered boldly: "You will be able to do nothing without the leave of God, who never abandons those who hope in Him."

"Take him back to prison," said Young to the gaoler, "and see to it that he doth not escape by the way."

"Put irons on his legs," raved Topcliffe, and foamed at the mouth when he saw the quiet smile of amusement that crossed the face of the priest.

When Father Gerard returned to his cell the gaoler put heavy irons on his legs, but at the same time he expressed his grief at having to do so, and his admiration at the priest's courage.

"It is no punishment to suffer in a good cause," replied the prisoner cheerfully, and forthwith gave him a present of money.

Now the gaoler, struck with this unusual conduct, argued within himself that a man who gave money for putting on irons would give more still for taking them off. So on the next day, on the plea of easing the hard lot of the prisoner, he unfastened them. To his surprise, however, he got nothing for his pains. After some days he put them on again and again received a reward. This time they were left on him permanently.

For three months Father Gerard lay in the Counter Prison, and although the days were long to one who loved active work for souls, he made a very good use of his time. For the first month he made from memory the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius,

giving four or five hours a day to meditation. And for the rest of the time his mind was full of the peace and consolation that God affords to one who has completely given up to Him his will.

Meantime his two faithful servants, Dick Fulwood and Little John, had been put to a cruel test in the attempt to force them to say something that would compromise others. Both these men were hung up for three hours on end, having their arms fixed to iron rings, and their bodies hanging in the air, a torture which causes frightful pain by stretching all the sinews.

But these heroic men could neither be forced by torture nor enticed by rewards to say one word as to where their master had been harboured, or to name one of his acquaintance. After a time Dick Fulwood managed to make his escape, and became the servant of Father Garnet during his own master's imprisonment; and Little John seems to have been set free for lack of evidence against him.

Meantime every artifice was being tried that could lead Father Gerard to say something that should enable them to accuse Mr Wiseman of treason and so get his estate and income into their hands. One day his gaoler remarked significantly that he supposed he knew that his fellow-Jesuit, Father Southwell, was also in prison for his faith.

"Well, if so, there is one who will know how to suffer for his Master," replied the priest, with a smile.

"I don't know so much about that," said the

fellow spitefully. "These poets, for they tell me he is one, are not the best at bearing pain. There is a rumour already that he has abjured. But you are to go before Mr Young yourself to-morrow, and perhaps you will hear something for yourself."

When Father Gerard appeared before the magistrate next day he was ordered to put on a suit of clothes that had been found at the house of Mr Wiseman. They just fitted Father Gerard, for whom, as a matter of fact, they had been made, but this fact he was of course not obliged to admit. Flying into a passion over what he was pleased to call the unreasonableness of the priest, Young exclaimed :

"How much more sensible is your friend Southwell, who, after long wilfulness, is now ready to conform, and wishes to talk with some man of learning in the reformed religion."

"Nay," said the priest in prompt reply ; "I will never believe that Father Southwell wishes to treat with him from any wavering in his own faith, or to learn what to believe from a heretic ; but he might perchance challenge any heretic that dared to do so, in order to dispute with him as Father Campion did, and as many others would do if you would let them."

Seizing a copy of the Scriptures, Young cried : "I swear upon this book that Southwell has offered to make terms with us with a view of embracing our religion."

"I do not believe it for a moment," replied Father Gerard firmly.

“What ? ” cried an officer of the Court. “Do you not believe his oath ? ”

“No,” said the priest. “I neither can nor will believe him, for I have a better opinion of Father Southwell’s firmness than of this gentleman’s truthfulness, since perhaps he thinks he is allowed to make this statement in order to beguile me.”

“No such thing,” said Young ; “but are you ready to conform if he has done so ? ”

“Certainly not,” thundered the priest, and added more gently : “I would have you understand that if I keep myself free from heresy it is not because he or any other man does the same, but because to act otherwise would be to deny Christ. This is what our Lord forbade, under a heavier penalty than man can inflict, when He said : “He that shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father who is in heaven.’ ”

“You are a stiff-necked fool,” replied Young uneasily, and bade them take him back to prison.

There was, of course, not a word of truth in what he had said about the poet priest ; but this was not the only occasion on which the quick wit and sure judgment of the young Jesuit stood him in good stead. Some twenty years before this time the Earl of Northumberland, champion of the Catholic Faith in the north of England, had been executed by order of Elizabeth for the part he had played in what was known as the Rising of the North. He left behind him four little girls, one of whom, in

spite of every effort to make her a Protestant, had remained a devout Catholic. At the time Father Gerard first came to London this lady was very anxious to dedicate herself to God as a nun, and asked his advice as to how she should best get over to Belgium and enter a religious house there.

She was at that time staying with her sister, a Protestant, whom she desired most earnestly to bring back to the Church. This sister was the wife of a well-known nobleman, Lord Henry Seymour, and it was to his house, therefore, that Father Gerard had been invited that he might make the acquaintance of his hostess and of the Lady Mary, her sister.

There he was spied upon by two servants of the house, who, being sought out by the emissaries of Young and Topcliffe at this juncture, declared themselves willing to bear witness against him. The matter was serious, as it involved the safety of both the sisters, one of whom had long been under the displeasure of the Queen for her firm adherence to the Faith.

With these servants the priest, without any preparation, now found himself confronted, and it required all his ready wit to be equal to the occasion.

"How can they prove I was there?" he asked.

"Well," said one, "I remember, for one thing, that it was Lent, and while my mistress ate meat, the Lady Mary and this fellow ate nothing but fish."

"Aha! What answer have you to that?" cried Young triumphantly.

“My answer is that I do not know these gentlemen,” said the priest, looking calmly and haughtily at the serving-men.

“But we know you !” they exclaimed ; “and know you to be the same that was in the house of our mistress on such and such a day.”

“You wrong your mistress in saying so,” replied he. “I, however, will not so wrong her as to say you speak the truth.”

“What a barefaced fellow you are !” exclaimed Young with unwilling admiration, to which the priest answered, with a smile :

“Doubtless I am if these men’s statements are true. But for myself, I cannot speak positively in this matter, for reasons I have often stated. Let them prove the truth and justice of what they say.”

Upon this Young, in a rage, sent him back to prison, for he knew that, without the priest’s actual admission, it would be impossible to accuse ladies in the high position held by the two who had been brought into this matter.

CHAPTER IX

IN SHINING FETTERS

“ MY fetters were rusty when I first put them on, but by moving about and wearing them every day I had rendered them quite bright and shining.”

These words, written by Father Gerard many years later, give a very good summary of his life at this period. Rigorous confinement, scanty food, lack of any outward spiritual consolation had only the effect of making his soul more bright, more joyous, more keen for the service of his Master.

After about three months of the dreary Counter Prison his conditions were somewhat improved by a change to the “ Clink,” a relief brought about by the influence of his many friends, both Protestant and Catholic.

The Clink was to him a change from Purgatory to Paradise. He had scarcely settled into his fairly large and airy cell than he heard, to his amazed delight, the sound of Catholic prayers being recited in the next room. Very cautiously he tapped, and presently was answered by a sound of scratching at his door.

“ Are you the priest, Father John Gerard ? ” whispered a voice through the keyhole.

"I am that most happy man."

"Put your nail gently into the crack of the mortar that binds the stone on the opposite wall," whispered the voice.

Smiling broadly as he recalled the adventures of his prison in past days at the Marshalsea, the priest searched the wall and soon found a big crack in the mortar that bound two stones together. He scraped carefully with the nail of his forefinger and all at once the mortar came away in a lump, revealing a fair-sized slit that opened into the next cell in a slanting direction.

"You have found it," said a delighted voice. "Now we can talk at ease. Be careful to fit in your lump of mortar if you hear steps outside, for our gaoler is a sour-tempered fellow and watches us pretty close at times. On this side we have hung a picture over the hole, which is at present quite undetected."

"Who on earth are you?" asked the priest.

"I am Brother Ralph Emerson," was the reply, "who had once the privilege and honour of being the attendant of that holy martyr, Father Edmund Campion."

"I have heard much of you from Leonard, who died in prison when I was a boy," said the priest eagerly, "and I am charmed to find you my neighbour. How long have you been here?"

"Ten years," was the unexpected answer; "and before that I made the Counter for three years my

place of residence. 'Tis a narrow house and somewhat monotonous, but when our Blessed Master chooses to make it His own abode, who am I that I should murmur ? ”

“ Are there others here of the Faith ? ”

“ Ay, many indeed. Overhead is John Lilly, like myself a lay brother of the Society of Jesus, and not far off your cell is Father William Atkinson, who knows you well and hath often spoken of your kindness to him when he first arrived in England.”

“ Ah ! I heard he had been arrested,” said Father Gerard with a note of anxiety in his voice. “ Hath he, do you know, stood firm ? ”

“ He much resents imprisonment,” was the guarded answer, “ and he is good friends with the gaolers, but that is all I know. All round you, indeed, are good men, true to the Faith, and most of them have the free run of the prison. You will, however, at first find it hard to obtain this liberty, as the gaoler is a surly fellow and has been warned to be strict with you. He will not allow you to speak to friends from outside, but should you wish to do so, send word by me that they should come to my cell and speak to you as I am doing through this hole.”

There now began for Father John a very different kind of imprisonment from that in the Counter. At first, indeed, he found himself closely watched, but before very long the surly gaoler took a fever and died, and his successor showed himself open both to the bribes and persuasions of which the young priest

possessed such good store. He even agreed not to visit the cell except at stated times, when, as Father Gerard said with a laugh to Brother Emerson : " He always finds me ready to receive him."

Before long that little cell in the Clink became the centre of a great spiritual mission. Other prisoners crept thither to make their confessions and receive counsel ; many from the outside world who had fallen away from the Faith in those days of trial visited it to lay bare their souls and be reconciled to the Church ; some few heretics even came to be instructed and received. Of these spiritual children Father Gerard was proud to say in later days that many entered convents or monasteries abroad ; others gave themselves to good works in the very midst of persecution ; one at least was martyred for the Faith.

One great source of joy at this time was a tiny chapel which the prisoners had fitted up in an empty cell on the upper floor. Here in the dim light of the early morning they would meet for Holy Mass, rejoicing together, like the early Christians, that they were counted worthy to suffer for their Master's sake.

But not only was Father Gerard thus the centre of missionary work within the prison ; he was also able in a marvellous way to carry on much of his labour in the world, making his cell, as it were, his headquarters. His faithful friend, young Mrs Wiseman, free herself, though her husband was still a prisoner,

took a house close by the Clink, in order that she might consult Father Gerard in time of need and carry communications between him and her husband.

Even after Mr Wiseman had obtained his release by means of large sums of money, he and his wife stayed on there and became his most energetic and useful helpers.

When it became known that the priest had now what he quaintly called a "fixed abode," numbers of the priests who had of late arrived in large numbers in England came to him for help and advice as to their work. One of their chief difficulties was as to where they should live in safety while they obtained the necessary means to carry on their labours ; and to overcome this obstacle Father Gerard directed that a house in a certain fairly safe quarter should be taken and placed in the charge of a noble gentlewoman named Anne Line. This house was kept up by the money his friends offered him for the purpose, and formed a refuge for the new-comers till they could take up their abode elsewhere.

This plan, though full of danger for Mistress Line, acted excellently for a time, and it was not till some six years later that this brave and utterly unselfish spiritual child of Father Gerard earned the crown of martyrdom at Tyburn.

Meantime Father John himself was risking his own life daily within the prison by saying Mass, hearing confessions and reconciling souls to the Church. Often, indeed, the neighbouring cell, which belonged

to Brother Emerson, formed a waiting-room for eight or nine persons at a time, who were waiting their turn to see him, and it is really a marvel that such energetic work did not attract the notice of the authorities sooner than it did.

It was Father Gerard's custom to send a number of young boys, the sons of his friends in England, who had no chance of education in their own land, to St Omer's or other Catholic seminaries abroad. Most of these turned out splendid fellows, and many became priests of the Jesuit Order and came back to the English mission field ; but there were always a few who could not stand the danger and dread of penalties and brought trouble upon the head of the benefactor.

One day two boys appeared in the prison and asked to see the priest. They told him that their names were Henry and James Carling, that their father was lately dead, and that their mother had bidden them seek Father Gerard and do whatever he told them.

As a rule boys fell ready victims to the kindly fun and high spirits of the priest, but these boys were oddly surly and seemed unwilling to confide in him. It had been already arranged that they should go to St Omer's, but as Father Gerard was extremely anxious to get a message through to a certain Jesuit college which they would have to pass, he decided, with some misgiving, to trust the lads.

"See here," he said, "I have an adventure for you. Your mother tells me you are fond of such

things, so now is your opportunity. I have here a letter written in lemon juice, which looks, as you see, like a piece of white paper. Wrap your collars up in it and it seems that its only use is to keep them clean."

At this the younger, James, seemed rather interested, as he took the paper in his hand, but Henry only stared gloomily out of the narrow window. For a moment Father Gerard hesitated, but remembering that he had no other means of sending the letter, he said :

"Now I want you to take this to the Jesuit college that you will pass on the way to St Omer's and give this paper to the Fathers, bidding them steep it in water, when they will be able to read all that I have written."

"And what will happen to us, Father, if they take us by the way ? " asked James.

"They can hardly harm you, I think," replied the priest, "though they may threaten you. I have trusted you, however, with my own life and liberty, for it is on me that the penalty will fall if this letter is discovered."

"If so be that they threaten to imprison us for carrying news abroad," grumbled the other, speaking for the first time, "are we to risk our lives for the sake of this letter ? "

"You are perfectly free to refuse," said the priest, "but I may tell you that much depends on the receipt of that letter, and that many a Catholic would be

glad of the chance of helping on the cause by delivering it."

His words struck no answering spark, but James, after a pause, said :

"Well, Father, we promised our mother we would do what you bade us. We will take the letter, therefore, and trust to luck to get through all right. But for myself, I wish these days were over, for we Catholics have the world against us and there is nobody that counts for anything upon our side."

"Except Almighty God," said the priest quietly.

The boys shuffled uncomfortably and looked sheepishly at each other. It seemed of little use to say more at that time, and Father Gerard thought it best to give them the letter and dismiss them with his blessing. But he was not altogether surprised when Brother John hurried in one day full of a piece of alarming news.

"Father, those Carling boys were stopped at the port of Gravesend and on being questioned did not hesitate to betray you. The gaoler's brother, who is a friend of mine, hath told me the whole story. It seems that the younger one would have held his tongue, but the elder spoke out and gave them a letter which he said they could read if they held it in water. The treacherous cubs that they are! I wish I could lay my hands on them."

"In blessing, I hope, brother," said the priest, smiling. "After all, we had little claim upon them, and they had been ill brought up. My chief grief is

that they may lose the chance of a Catholic education now for ever. Be not angry, I pray you, good brother. It may well be that the poor lads were frightened into betrayal."

So he dismissed a subject that might be going to cost him his life and went on with his daily business until the summons came to appear before the Council.

Before his examiners Father Gerard showed his usual calm courage. He insisted on wearing his Jesuit habit, and when his persecutors railed on him, calling him "hypocrite," he replied with spirit :

"When I was arrested you called me courtier, and said I had dressed myself in this fashion to disguise my real character, and to be able to deal with persons of rank without being recognised. I told you then that I did not like a layman's dress and would much rather wear my own. Well, now I am doing so and you are in a rage again. In fact, you are not satisfied with either piping or mourning, but you seek an excuse against me."

"But why," said they, "did you not put on this dress before, instead of wearing a disguise and taking a false name—a thing no good man would do?"

"No doubt you would have preferred me to do so," replied the priest, "so that you might have taken me at once and so prevented all our work. But remember that St Raphael himself personated another so that he might carry on God's work the better."

“Do you know this paper?” asked the sour-faced Wade, then secretary to the Lords of the Council.

“I do not.”

Dipping the blank sheet into a basin of water, they showed him his writing and his signature.

“This may, of course, be merely a forgery,” said the priest, “but it certainly looks like the letter I gave to the brothers Carling.”

“It is that letter,” said they, “and now perhaps you will hardly deny that you are guilty of sending those two boys out of the country to be educated against the law of the land in a Catholic college.”

“Not at all,” replied the priest coolly. “I acknowledge that I have done so, and I think you must agree with me that a good education is the best thing one can give to boys. Moreover, as they cannot, as Catholics, be educated in their own country, it seems the best thing one can do is to send them abroad. I only wish I had the means to send more.”

The torrent of abuse that followed this candid admission ended with the threat: “In truth you have too much liberty by far, and you shall not enjoy it long.”

With these sinister words ringing in his ears Father Gerard was not surprised to find himself soon afterwards in the presence of Topclffie, that monster of cruelty, whose chief delight was to torture the servants of the Lord. His object now was to kill two birds with one stone by bringing the priest face

to face with old Mrs Wiseman, who had for a long time been confined in the Gatehouse Prison, near the west end of Westminster Abbey. He hoped, of course, that the lady, who was accused of having "harboured" Father Gerard, would recognise him and thus bring both herself and him into the net. A great deal of interest had been stirred up in this matter, and the Dean of Westminster himself was present at the interview.

But old Mrs Wiseman combined the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove. When she saw Father John coming in with the gaolers she gave a start of joy, but instantly controlling herself she said to the latter: "Is that the person you spoke of? I do not know him, but he looks like a priest." With that she made him a very low reverence and he bowed in return.

"Do you not recognise her?" said the Dean.

"I do not."

"Tell the truth," said the harsh voice of the evil-visaged man who sat at the table like a brooding fate. "Have you reconciled any person to the Church of Rome?"

To have done this was high treason, but Father Gerard replied at once: "Yes, in good truth I have done so, and I am sorry that I have not done this good service to more."

"Well," said Topcliffe, with a sneer, "how many would you have liked to reconcile if you could? A thousand?"

"Certainly ; a hundred thousand, and many more still, if I could."

"That would be enough to levy an army against the Queen," said Topcliffe significantly.

"Those whom I reconciled," replied the priest firmly, "would not be against the Queen, but all for her ; for we hold that obedience to superiors is of obligation."

"No such thing," stormed the Commissioners. "You teach rebellion. See, we have here a Bull of the Pope granted to Sanders when he wanted to stir up Ireland to rebel. Here, read it for yourself."

"There is no need. No doubt the Holy Father gave him authority as legate which he may have misused. But I have no power to meddle with such matters. We are forbidden to do so."

"Take and read it. I will have you read it," yelled Topcliffe like a madman.

The priest took it in his hand and seeing the name of Jesus at the top he reverently kissed it.

"What !" yelled Topcliffe, "you kiss a Papal Bull, do you ?"

"I kissed the name of Jesus, to which all love and honour are due," said Father Gerard. "But if it is a Papal Bull, as you say, I reverence it also on that score."

So saying, he kissed the paper again, to the intense rage of Topcliffe, who, finding he could not cow him, ordered him back to prison.

At Christmas he was again brought before his persecutor and there was then put to him the famous "bloody question" which had brought so many of his fellow-Catholics to the gallows.

"What would you do," asked Topcliffe, "if the Pope sent an army into England asserting that the object was solely to bring back the kingdom to the Catholic religion, and on the plea that there was no way left of introducing the Catholic Faith, commanding all his followers to aid his cause? Which side would you then take—the Pope's or the Queen's?"

Now the priest was well aware that whichever way he answered the reply would injure him "either in soul or in body," so he said warily: "I am a true Catholic and a true subject of my Queen. If this were actually to happen, which is very unlikely, I should act as becomes a true Catholic and a true subject."

This did not satisfy Topcliffe, who pressed him for another reply. This, however, was steadily refused, although his firmness brought upon him a storm of curses and threats. "You think," stormed the bully, "to creep to the Cross this year; but before that time comes I will take good care that you do no such thing."

He meant, of course, to have the priest executed before the next Good Friday, but though he failed in this intention, his words were fulfilled in a curious way.

In the Lent that followed this interview Topcliffe himself was in serious trouble. It happened that his only son had killed a man with his sword in the great hall of the Queen's Bench. When this offence was brought before the members of the Council Topcliffe gave such offence by his overbearing manners and open contempt for their authority that he was apprehended and thrown into the Marshalsea. This happened on Passion Sunday, in the year of Our Lord 1595, and on the Good Friday following he wrote a cringing letter to the Queen, dated "This Good or Evil Friday," and reminding her that his fall had caused "in all prisons rejoicings ; and it is likely that the fresh dead bones of Father Southwell at Tyburn and Father Walpole at York, executed both since Shrovetide, will cry from the ground with joy."

From his prison cell Father Gerard had already heard of the martyrdom of these two young priests of his Order. Father Southwell, the poet priest, he knew well and loved most tenderly, while for Father Walpole, though he probably did not know him in person, he had always felt the strongest admiration and respect. Rumours had reached his cell that told an awful tale of admissions wrung from this priest under torture of the most fiendish kind. He had heard that Topcliffe had said of him : " Let him speak—this stubborn Jesuit who knows so much—speak, or hang till life should be only horrible torment." But his anxiety lest this sensitive soul

had actually been driven to betray his cause had been relieved ere long by the news that the so-called confession betrayed nobody and told nothing that was not already known to the Government. It was the disappointment thus caused to his enemies that gave him over to the hands of Topcliffe for the terrible months that preceded his trial and martyrdom at York in the April of that year ; and it was his own desire to do penance for his momentary lapse that caused the report to be brought to Father Gerard by one who knew him in those last days : “ He was very austere to himself after his coming out of the Tower. At night he lay flat upon the stones unless he leaned upon his elbow ; and they that lay in the chamber with him did affirm that they never wakened but they heard the Father pray or sigh.”

No doubt Father Gerard would have followed in the steps of these martyrs at a very early date ; but then came along the news of the downfall of the arch-persecutor, and he and his fellow-prisoners breathed a sigh of relief for the respite. Emboldened by this, they began to use what little liberty was theirs more freely, and to admit to the Sacraments and rites of the Church a greater number than had formerly been possible.

On the Good Friday of that year, when Topcliffe was himself tasting something of his own medicine in the Marshalsea, all the Catholics in the Clink Prison and a large number of those outside were gathered in a good-sized cell just above Father

John's. The latter had said all the prayers appointed for the day, up to the point where the priest has to take off his shoes. He had pulled them off and knelt down and was about to creep towards the Cross to make the threefold adoration when, just as he had moved two paces, the head gaoler knocked loudly at the door of his room underneath.

A silence of consternation followed, during which could plainly be heard the increasing noise of the knocking below.

"Go, Brother John," said Father Gerard, beginning hastily to take off his vestments. "Tell him I will be with him anon. And you, my children, disperse yourselves as quietly as you can. Fear not for me. It means that our Blessed Lord has called me from the adoration of the material cross to the spiritual cross that He himself has prepared for me."

Hastening downstairs, Father Gerard found an angry and red-faced gaoler awaiting him. "How comes it," he shouted, "that I find you out of your cell when you ought to be strictly confined to it?"

Knowing his man, the priest pretended to be as angry as he was himself, and answered hotly: "A nice question to ask! Surely you know that it is the day upon which the Lord died upon the Cross for us all! Surely this is no act of a friend, as I thought you were, to visit me at a time when, if ever, we are bound to be busy with our prayers."

"What!" said he. "You were at Mass, were you? I will go up and see."

“No such thing,” said Father John. “You seem to know very little of our ways. There is not a single Mass said to-day throughout the whole Church. Go up if you like, but understand that if you do, neither I nor any other Catholic here will ever pay anything for our rooms. You may put us all, if you like, into the common prison of the poor who do not pay at all. But you will be no gainer by that, whereas if you act in a friendly way by us, and do not come upon us unawares in this fashion, you will not find us ungrateful, as you have not found us hitherto.”

At this he softened down a little and Father John went on :

“What have you come for now, pray ? ”

“Surely,” said he, “to greet you from Master Topcliffe.”

“Indeed ! Since when have he and I been such great friends ? Is he not in the prison of the Marshalsea ? He cannot do anything against me just now, I fancy.”

“No,” said the gaoler, “he cannot. But he really sends to greet you. When I visited him to-day he asked how you were. I replied that you were very well. ‘But,’ said he, ‘he does not bear his imprisonment as patiently as I do mine. I would have you greet him, then, in my name and tell him what I have said.’ So I have come now for the purpose of bringing his message to you.”

“Very well,” replied the priest. “Now tell from me that by the grace of God I bear my imprisonment

for the Faith with cheerfulness, and that I could wish his cause were the same."

Thereupon the gaoler went away, rating his servants because they did not keep a stricter hand upon the prisoners, and all unknowing that he had actually accomplished what Topcliffe had threatened by checking the priest in the very act of "creeping to the Cross."

CHAPTER X

A CHAMBER OF HORRORS

IT will be remembered that among the fellow-prisoners of Father Gerard in the Clink at the period was a certain priest named Father William Atkinson, who had, for some time past, been on intimate terms with him. To him Father Gerard had played the benefactor in many ways. He had received him when he first landed in England, and had seen that he had safe lodging with some of his own friends. He had converted his mother and brother to the Faith, and when Father Atkinson had been arrested and thrown into prison he had provided for him both friends and money.

It is possible that this man became jealous of the fact that the Catholics who came to the prison as visitors all turned naturally to Father Gerard as their friend and adviser. Or it may have been that he hoped to obtain favour from the authorities by betraying his friend. Whatever was the cause, this fact remains. This wretched man, soon to become an open apostate, reported to some of the most malignant enemies of Father Gerard that he had seen the priest hand a packet of letters written from Rome and Brussels to Little

John, his former servant and now in the employ of Father Garnet.

For Little John, who, it will be remembered, had been arrested with his master, had lately been released through the money and influence of a wealthy Catholic gentleman who knew well the value of his services in contriving "hiding holes" for priests.

Now the procuring or passing on of letters from Catholics abroad was a serious offence in itself, and if proved in this case would also implicate Father Garnet, upon whom the persecutors had long wished to lay their hands.

One morning, when Father Gerard was instructing two boys in his cell before sending them abroad to be educated, the door was suddenly thrown open and the head gaoler, accompanied by a Justice of the Peace and two pursuivants, entered. The priest at once gave a sign to the boys, one of whom was able to slip past the unwelcome visitor and make good his escape. The other was held fast, but as the Father was allowed to have visitors, and nothing could be proved against the lad, he was presently allowed to depart. But as far as Father Gerard was concerned, they evidently hoped that the liberty he had been given would now prove his undoing and that they would find the cell full of incriminating documents.

Fortunately all the manuscripts, reliquaries and money in his possession had been carefully hidden away in holes contrived by Brother Emerson, who alone shared his secrets; so the close search

instituted by the new-comers ended in their complete discomfiture. This, of course, only made them more furious. The pursuivants began to search the person of the priest and one, opening his doublet, discovered his hair shirt.

"What is this?" said he, not knowing such a thing by sight.

"A shirt," replied the priest briefly.

"Ho, ho," said he, "it is a hair shirt," and catching hold of it he tried to drag it off by force.

The fastidious instinct of a well-bred man, accustomed to see such varlets fly to do his bidding, rose hot within the priest and he raised his hand to deal a blow that would have stretched the rascal on the floor. But the remembrance of a similar indignity borne by his Master with perfect patience came to his aid, and he turned quietly to the magistrate, asking if this were allowed. On this the latter ordered the fellow to leave him alone, and bade the priest prepare to leave the prison at once and accompany him elsewhere.

An hour later, after much waiting and uncertainty as to his destination, Father Gerard found himself standing just within the grim entrance gate of the Tower of London, face to face with the Lord Lieutenant, a knight of the name of Berkeley.

By this officer he was at once conducted in perfect silence to a large high tower of three storeys, with a separate prison in each. There he committed the

person of the priest to the charge of a servant in whom he appeared to put very great confidence, saying: "See to it that he does not escape, for these Catholics be slippery as eels. But he is a gentleman of good family, so treat him accordingly, as far as it is meet."

Night was at hand, and so the servant brought a little straw, which he threw on the ground, and went away, fastening the door of the prison and securing the upper door both with a great bolt and with iron bars. The clang of the bars was the death knell to any hope of escape that Father Gerard might have entertained, and he remembered that the good fortune of certain prisoners in this respect had probably caused a much closer and more rigid imprisonment of the rest. It was too dark to see anything of his surroundings, so the priest knelt down and commended himself to the Master who had never abandoned him in his bondage, as well as to the Blessed Virgin and to his patron saints; after which he lay down upon the straw with a tranquil mind and slept very well all that night.

Next morning he was able by the dim light that filtered through the tiny loopholes that were his windows to examine his cell more closely. He had been imprisoned in what was known as the Salt Tower, in a room shaped like a pentagon, about fifteen feet across. It was quite bare of furniture, and there was nothing to hold the attention of the prisoner till he suddenly saw an inscription on the

wall. There in the soft stone a hand now cold and still had cut a name :

HENRY WALPOLE

To Father Gerard the words spoke as though with a living voice. They spoke to him of the brave young priest who had undergone unspeakable torment in this very place before he laid down his life for the Faith at York.

They spoke of the gallant band of brothers whom he had loved and helped ; and then, as he peered farther in the dim light, he saw what brought him to his knees in deep devotion. For the recess of the stone-blocked window had evidently been the martyr's oratory. On either side he had written with chalk the names of the different choirs of angels, and on the top, above the cherubim and seraphim, the name of Mary, Mother of God, and over that the name of Jesus, and over that again, in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, the name of God.

As he knelt a great sense of consolation filled the soul of Father Gerard, for he felt the cell was hallowed by the presence of a most holy martyr, one who had suffered such terrible tortures in this secret place because the authorities were afraid to let it be known in public to what lengths they had gone in the vain effort to get him to betray his friends.

To those of us who know the whole story of Father Walpole, as Father Gerard could not have known it in those days, that tiny oratory speaks still more

plainly of tragedy, of pity and of pain unspeakable. For it must have been before that very window that the young priest, broken in mind and body by incessant racking, poured forth his sorrow and bitter repentance for having, as he thought, given information to his persecutors that he had sworn never to reveal. As a matter of fact, he told them nothing they did not know already and nothing that could injure others in any way. But if his soul, purified by the fires of martyrdom, were ever allowed to revisit that little cell, he might well have brought a message of encouragement to its new inmate, as he knelt there with heart full of courage, though harassed by dread of his unknown fate.

He was not allowed to remain there very long. The very next day he was brought by the gaoler to an upper and larger room, though at his urgent request he was allowed to return frequently to the martyr's cell in order to say his prayers in the spot hallowed by Father Walpole's sufferings.

His gaoler asked him next day if he had any friends who would send him in a bed. But he, fearing a trap for those of his Catholic acquaintances who were at liberty, warily replied that all his friends were in the Clink, but that they would probably be able to supply him with what was needed. As usual, the gaoler seems to have fallen in love with him on the spot. He showed him the greatest kindness and himself offered to visit his former prison, where the Catholic prisoners gave him money for

himself and a bed and linen for Father Gerard, beseeching him to treat his prisoner well and to ask them for anything he wanted.

But the time of supreme trial was now very near.

On the third day of his imprisonment Father Gerard was just finishing his dinner when the gaoler entered, with his face full of grief.

"The Lords Commissioners are here, sir," said he, "and with them the Queen's Attorney. You must please go down to them."

"I am ready," said Father Gerard. "I only ask you first to let me say a Pater and an Ave in the lower dungeon."

"That you shall do, for you will need all your prayers," replied the man sorrowfully, and stood by him with respect as the priest knelt humbly before the martyr's shrine.

He was then taken to the house of the Lord Lieutenant and subjected to a close examination. Throughout this, while confessing openly that he had received letters at various times from abroad, Father Gerard refused absolutely to say from whom they came or by whom they were brought. They pressed him as to whether he had sent these letters to Father Garnet, his superior, but his steadfast reply was always the same :

"I will name no names."

"Your refusal proves you to be thoroughly disloyal," said the Attorney, "and you are warned as to the result of such refusal."

"I refuse not from any disloyal mind," said the priest. "I protest, as I look to be saved, that these things are not concerned with any matter of State, but only with matters of devotion."

"You say," replied the Attorney-General, "that you do not wish to offend against the State. Tell us, then, where this Garnet is. For he is an enemy of the State and you are bound to give information of such people."

"He is no enemy of the State," answered the priest warmly. "But, on the contrary, I am sure that he would be ready to lay down his life for the Queen or the State. However, I do not know where he is, and if I did I would not tell you."

"But you shall tell us," said they, "before you leave this place."

"Please God," said he, "that shall never be."

They glanced at each other with a meaning smile, and one of them handed him a warrant for putting him to the torture. This Father Gerard read with an unmoved countenance, merely saying: "By the help of God I will never do what is against justice and the Catholic Faith. You have me in your power. Do what God permits you, for you certainly cannot go beyond."

One of them, more humane than the rest, began to entreat him not to force them to extremities, telling him that they were bound not to desist from torturing him every day as long as life should last, unless he gave the required information.

“ I trust in the goodness of God,” replied the priest with courage, “ that He will not allow me to do so base an act as to bring innocent persons to harm. Nor indeed do I fear what you can do to me, for we are all in God’s hands.”

“ So be it,” said they, and began to make ready.

It was a grim procession that set forth that April afternoon through an underground passage that led from the Lieutenant’s house to the vaults of the White Tower. The attendants went first with lighted candles, followed by Father Gerard and the gaoler, while the rear was brought up by the whispering Commissioners. They emerged into a huge dark cavern, through the gloom of which the priest could dimly perceive grim shapes that hung from the walls or were suspended from the roof, hinting at terrible possibilities of pain.

Some of these were presently shown him by the Commissioners, who told him that he would have to taste them every one.

“ Now are you willing to satisfy us on the points asked ? ” said they.

“ It is out of my power to satisfy you,” he replied, and throwing himself on his knees as he turned away from them he prayed desperately for courage and divine support.

Then they led him to a great upright beam or pillar of wood, which formed one of the supports of the vast crypt. At the top of this column were fixed some iron staples, and here they placed on his

wrists gauntlets of iron and bade him mount upon two or three wicker steps. Then raising his arms they inserted an iron bar through the rings of the gauntlets and then through the staples of the pillar, putting a pin through the bar so that it should not slip. His arms being now fixed above his head, they withdrew the steps, one by one, so that he hung by his arms and his hands.

He was, however, of such unusual height that his toes still touched the ground, and they had next to dig this away beneath his feet. They could not raise him higher, for he hung from the topmost staples in the pillar.

Hanging thus, with his great weight suspended from his wrists, he began in his agony to pray aloud and those standing round him, seeing him bathed in sweat, pressed him again and again to confess.

The brave answer, "I neither can nor will," came in a voice hoarse with suffering and almost inaudible.

Intense pain of body had brought in its train a terrible distress of mind, which, though it did not urge him to betray his friends, caused an utter inability to resign himself or to put confidence in God. But this, the most awful part of his trial, did not last for long. There came to him presently this comforting remembrance: "The very furthest and utmost they can do is to take away my life, and I have often desired to give my life to God. I am in God's hands, who knows well what I suffer and is all-powerful to sustain me."

From that moment he felt no more trouble in his soul, and even the bodily pain seemed more bearable than before.

By this time the Commissioners had had their fill of watching the agony of a fellow-creature, and departing to the Lieutenant's house they waited there, sending now and again to know what was going on in the crypt. There the grim drama proceeded under the superintendence of four or five torturers, too used to such scenes of horror to feel remorse or pity. Only one kindly hand was there to wipe away the sweat that poured from the victim's face, and even this gaoler only added to the sufferings of the priest by imploring him all the time "to tell the gentlemen what they wanted to know." In vain Father John bade him be silent, saying: "I am not minded to lose my soul as well as my body." Nothing would make the man stop his importunings.

Through dim and confused ears came also to the priest the words of others who stood around him: "He will be a cripple all his life if he live through it; but he will have to be tortured every day till he confesses." But still his only answer was to keep on praying in a low voice and to repeat the holy names of Jesus and Mary.

Soon after one o'clock a fainting fit brought a brief period of respite. They lifted him up and replaced the steps till he came to himself; but directly he began to pray they let him down again. This happened several times as the long dark hours

dragged on, but a little before five one of the Commissioners returned and asked him: "Will you now obey the commands of the Queen and Council?"

Hoarsely came the answer from that pitiful figure on his cross:

"No; what you ask is unlawful. . . . I will never do it."

"At least," urged the other, "say that you would like to speak to Secretary Cecil."

"I have nothing to say . . . and if I were to ask for him scandal would be given . . . people would imagine I was yielding at length and willing to give information."

Upon that the Commissioner turned his back in a rage, shouting: "Hang then till you rot."

Then all the Commissioners left the Tower.

A little later the torture ended for that day. But even in his helpless state, as they carried him back to his cell, Father John, seeing some prisoners watching him with curiosity and pity, had the presence of mind to say in a loud voice to his gaoler that he wondered he could ever have been asked to tell the whereabouts of Father Garnet, seeing that it was a sin to betray the innocent. Of course this was said to prevent the authorities from publishing a false statement that he had "made confession." He hoped also that word might reach Father Garnet that his refuge was in question, so that he might take the more heed to himself. Such heroic unselfishness earned still more respect from his gaoler,

who, seeing how prostrate he was, hastened to make a fire and to bring him food. But he was in no condition to eat, though he was thankful to lie upon his bed in peace. So the night wore away and the priest, sleepless but calm, awaited the events of the next day.

Early next morning he was brought forth before Commissioner Wade, who looked with concern, real or pretended, at the swollen arms and hands that would not pass through ordinary sleeves and had to be covered by a loose cloak.

"I am sent to you by the Queen and Master Cecil," said he, "who assure you that they know for certain that Garnet *is* meddling in political matters and that he is an enemy to the State. Consequently you must submit your judgment and produce him."

"They cannot possibly know this by their own experience," replied Father Gerard, "since they have no personal knowledge of the man. Now I have lived with him and know him well, and I know him to be incapable of this thing."

"Then you will not acknowledge it or tell us what we ask?"

"No, certainly not. I neither can nor will."

"It would be better for you if you did," he said threateningly, and going to the door called out: "Let the superintendent of torture enter."

A grim and forbidding figure answered the summons, a figure at which the stoutest heart might well have quailed. To him Wade said: "I deliver

this man into your hands. You are to rack him twice to-day, and twice daily till he chooses to confess."

With these words he departed.

Once more that awful procession advanced to the dark walls of the torture chamber; once more the iron gauntlets were forced with excruciating pain over the swollen flesh, and the tall form of the priest was hung again as though from a cross. Still he prayed continually, offering to Jesus his agonising hands, his strained and labouring heart; but at length he fainted so completely that they could not bring him to, and thought him already dead.

When he recovered consciousness he found himself supported on a bench, with someone pouring water down his throat and the Lieutenant regarding him with some anxiety. When he saw that his victim could speak he said at once: "Do you not see how much better it is for you to yield to the wishes of the Queen than to lose your life in this way?"

With a spirit remarkable in one of his condition, Father Gerard replied:

"No, certainly, I do not see it. I would rather die a thousand times than do what they require of me."

"You will not do it, then?" said he.

"No, indeed, I will not," he answered, "not while a breath remains in my body."

"Well then," said he, and it seemed as though he spoke regretfully, "we must hang you up again now, and after dinner as well."

"Let us go, then, in the name of God," replied the

priest firmly. "I have but one life and if I had more I would gladly offer them all up for this cause," and forthwith he tried to walk alone to the pillar. He was too weak for this, however, and they carried him thither and left him hanging in agony of body but with great consolation of soul.

After the space of nearly an hour the Lieutenant gave orders that he should be taken down. The sight of torture endured with such superhuman courage seemed indeed to have quite unnerved this official, for it was but a few months later that he resigned his post because he would no longer be an instrument in torturing innocent people in such cruel fashion. When Father Gerard had been carried back to his cell he found the eyes of his gaoler were full of tears.

"Indeed, sir," said the man, weeping as he spoke, "I could not help it when I saw how you suffered without a word. And my wife, though she knows you not, has been crying and praying for you all day. Try now and eat a little food."

"Then you must feed me like a babe, for my hands are done for," said the priest, with a smile, "and give me but little, since my throat is swollen almost as much as my hands and arms."

That day and the next passed peacefully away; and afterwards, although Father John daily expected the dread summons to the torture chamber, he was left to himself. Years later, in his humility, the priest wrote these words, referring to this time :

“Our merciful God, while to other stronger champions, such as Father Walpole, He gave a sharp struggle so that they might overcome, gave his weak soldier but a short struggle so that he might not be overcome. They indeed being perfected in a short time, fulfilled a long space; but I, unworthy of so great a good, was left to run out my ways, and so supply for my defects by washing my soul with my tears, since I deserved not to wash it with my blood. God so ordained it and His holy will be done.”

CHAPTER XI

THE CELL

IT was three weeks before Father Gerard, now a close prisoner in the East Tower, could use his fingers or move his wrists. He made use of this time for making a definite retreat, giving four or five hours to meditation every day, saying his office and celebrating every morning what is known as a "dry Mass"—that is, a Mass such as is said by those who are practising saying Mass before being ordained priests. This he had to do because he had none of the requirements for consecrating the Blessed Sacrament itself.

When the retreat was over he asked for books, but was only allowed a Bible. He obtained a few, however, from his friends in the *Clink* through the kindly gaoler, and with them some large oranges, which he hoped to use for a very important purpose. His great need was to find some way of communicating with his friends in secret, and for this he was laying his plans. Directly he could move his hands again he began to cut crosses out of his orange peel and to sew them two and two together; and in the same way he made a number of rosaries, strung on silk cords. These he asked the gaoler to carry as

gifts to his friends in the Clink, and to this the man readily agreed, as he could not see that any harm could come of such innocent mementoes.

Meantime the priest had put by some of the juice of the fruit in a cup, intending to use it to convey a letter to his friends, but as he dared not ask for a pen, he made request for a quill toothpick, and having made a small part of it into a pen let the gaoler freely see the rest of it. Lastly he asked for a piece of paper in which to wrap his crosses and rosaries, and on this he managed, with fingers still numb and stiff, to write a few lines in orange juice, bidding his friends communicate with him in the same way. He asked them also to give the bearer a little money, and to promise him more whenever he brought crosses or rosaries with a few words from his prisoner to say that all was well with him.

In this way Father John kept up communication with the outer world for about six months. He soon found that it was safe to send pencilled notes in the same way, writing nothing but spiritual matters on the one side in pencil, which the gaoler could read if he willed, and using orange juice on the apparently blank part of the paper for directions and particular advice for his friends and former penitents.

One day he made an interesting discovery. The gaoler did not know how to read a single word, though he pretended that he could do so. This Father Gerard discovered by reading aloud some words that he had written in quite a different way

from that in which they were pencilled on the paper, while the man was looking over his shoulder and apparently reading them with him. After that he wrote whatever he liked and found it was always faithfully carried. But he was always careful not to write anything that might compromise his friends if the letters failed to reach their destination, and he now never used lemon juice for the purpose, as he had done in the Clink. For that which is written in lemon juice can be read whether it is steeped in water or heated at the fire, and when the paper is dried the writing disappears again till it is steeped afresh or again held to the fire. But anything written with orange juice is at once washed out by water altogether; but if held to the fire the characters appear and remain once for all, so that a letter of this sort, once read, can never be delivered to anyone as though it had not been read. This was a very important point, for if the letter was intercepted and read, and then passed on to the person addressed in order to decoy them into a trap, the latter could see that it had been read and disown it, if it contained anything dangerous.

After a time Father Gerard managed, through some of his good friends, to purchase the freedom of the faithful John Lilly, and from that period he always brought to the gaoler whatever the priest required. Then suddenly there occurred an event that effectively broke the monotony of prison life in a solitary cell.

When Father John had first been imprisoned in the Clink he had made the acquaintance of a young clerk of the name of Francis Page, who at that time, being in receipt of a good income at a London office, had become engaged to the daughter of **his** employer. But the trouble was that the father of this maiden would not give his consent to a marriage that he deemed beneath his daughter's position, and so the two young people used often to seek out the priest in prison and confide their difficulties to his sympathetic ear. To him it soon became clear that neither of them had any real vocation to the married state. The girl discovered that she wished nothing so much as to enter a convent; and the young Francis, a handsome boy with a very winning manner, declared his wish to become a Jesuit. It was through Father Gerard's help that he became at this time an inmate of the house of Mr Wiseman, lately released from prison, and there he began his studies in preparation for going abroad, when that was possible.

When Frank Page heard that Father Gerard had been imprisoned in the Tower, he never rested till he had discovered in what part of the prison he lay, and every day, at the imminent risk of discovery, he used to walk up and down outside the walls in a spot from which he could see his window, on the bare chance of one day catching sight of him.

One warm summer day Father Gerard had gone to the window for a breath of air, when he noticed a young man walking at a little distance outside the

Tower, who at once pulled off his hat when he appeared at the window. Then he saw him begin to walk again, and, on pretence of smoothing his hair, off came his hat again, unmistakably in the direction of the cell. When this had gone on for some minutes Father Gerard became convinced that the handsome boyish face that he saw from afar was no other than that of Frank Page.

Loving him for his devotion, while blaming him for his rashness, the priest raised his hand and gave him his blessing and then at once withdrew from the window lest suspicion should fall upon the lad. Next day, however, Frank Page was there again, walking up and down and taking off his hat whenever he turned round. Nor would he go till he had received the Father's blessing as before. In vain Father Gerard signed to him not to do this. Every day he appeared and repeated his obeisance. But one day, as the priest went to the window and smiled to see the active young figure appear like clockwork upon the scene, his look changed swiftly to one of dismay. For even as Frank lifted his hat there was a rush, a scuffle, and the boy was in the hands of warders and carried away a prisoner.

There were many secrets which Frank Page might have betrayed as the price of liberty, but when he was brought before the Lieutenant he was on his guard. He refused steadfastly to know anything about Father Gerard or his friends, and declared with spirit that he had a perfect right to take his

morning walk by the river bank whenever he pleased. So they shut him up in the Beauchamp Tower for several days, where you may see to-day his inscription cut deep into the stone wall :

EN DIEU EST MON ESPERANCE.—F. PAGE

Meantime they discovered that he had been staying at the house of Mr Wiseman, the friend of Gerard the prisoner, and this so increased their suspicions that they sent for the priest to examine him anew.

On the way to the magistrates' room Father John passed through the hall, where Frank, in company with the gaoler, was walking up and down for his daily exercise. Suspecting that this had been purposely arranged by the authorities, Father Gerard never even glanced in his direction, but passed on at once to the room.

The magistrates began at once: "There is a young man here named Francis Page who says he knows you and desires to speak with you."

"He can do so if he wishes," replied the priest, "but who is **this** Francis Page?"

"Don't you know him?" said they. "Why, he knows you so well that he can recognise you even in the distance and comes every day to salute you."

At once Father John guessed that they said this not because they knew it from the boy's own lips, but to make him think that Frank had betrayed him. He therefore held to it that he knew nothing of the man, and when he was in the act of going back to his

cell he took the opportunity of warning his young friend of the line he had taken in the matter.

Looking round the hall, where Frank Page and others were still at exercise, he said in a loud voice : " Is there anyone here of the name of Frank Page, who says he knows me well and had often come before my window to see me ? Which of all these is he ? I know no such person, and I wonder that anyone would be willing to injure himself by saying such things."

In vain the gaoler tried to stop him. Enough had been said to warn the young man, when they told him that Father Gerard had acknowledged his acquaintance, that they spoke a falsehood.

Great was the fury of the authorities when they found themselves thus baffled by the Jesuit's quick wit, and vainly did they storm against those concerned. Nothing definite could be proved against Frank Page and they were obliged to release him.

The future of this young man is so full of interest that we will leave Father Gerard for a while in his cell and follow his fortunes with the same interest as did the prisoner himself.

As soon as possible Francis Page slipped across to Belgium, where some three years later he was ordained priest at Douay. After that he returned to England and carried on a very active work in the conversion of souls from the house of Mistress Anne Line, that devout lady, the friend of Father Gerard, who kept a kind of hostel where priest and converts

could meet. In the year of his return this hostel was given up as being too dangerous, and Mistress Line had taken a room in another house which she often used as a harbourage for priests.

On the Feast of the Purification, in the year after the return of Father Page, a number of Catholics besought her to arrange that Mass should be said there, and as Father Page was more than willing to take the risk, she admitted a much larger congregation than was at all wise under the circumstances. The altar was vested by loving hands and the Mass had just begun, when a white-faced maid brought the dreadful news :

“ The priest-hunters are at the door.”

There was just time for Father Page to slip off his vestments and to mingle with the rest before the pursuivants entered. Perhaps some look of authority betrayed him, for they laid hold on him almost at once and began to question him and the others as to whether he were not the priest. Loud wrangling followed ; no one would acknowledge that there was a priest present, although the altar stood there ready for Mass. The Catholics pretended to be very indignant at the intrusion, and a good deal of hustling and jostling took place, in the midst of which Father Page, seeing there was an open door near, slipped out, closed the door after him and hastened to a hiding-place at the top of the house, cleverly contrived by his hostess. And though they searched everywhere for him he was not to be found.

Not till he had managed to escape from London in safety did he hear of the fate that had overtaken his brave and loyal friend, Anne Line. She was thrown into prison on a charge of harbouring priests, and there she seemed to have her dearest wish fulfilled. For she had often said : " Though I desire above all things to die for Christ, I dare not hope to die by the hands of the executioners ; but perhaps our Lord will let me be taken in the same house as a priest and then be thrown into a chill and filthy dungeon where I shall not be able to last out long in this life." She was, however, granted the desire of her heart in full. When she was brought to trial and asked if she were guilty of the charge of harbouring priests, she cried in a clear voice that all could hear : " My Lord, nothing grieves me but that I could not receive a thousand priests more."

She listened joyfully to her death sentence, although so weak in body that she could not stand, and on her return to her cell wrote a letter of glad farewell to Father Page. In this letter she spoke most lovingly of her Father in God, John Gerard, to whom she bequeathed her bed. And then with glad soul she prepared to die the death of a martyr.

She was privileged to do this in the company of two of the priests she had served and honoured, but when she arrived at Tyburn she began to be pestered by Protestant preachers who warned her to abandon her " errors."

" Away ! I have no dealings with you, nor com-

munion either," cried Mistress Line, and then, after kissing the gallows, knelt and prayed devoutly until the hangman had done his work.

Just a year later Father Page joined her in the noble army of martyrs that, in those years, thronged the stairs of heaven.

Soon after his escape his strong desire to enter the Society of Jesus was granted, but before he could get over to Belgium for his novitiate he was again taken prisoner. The sequel must be told in the striking words of Father Gerard himself.

"He was tried," he says, "like gold in the fire, and being accepted as a victim, he washed his robe in the blood of the Lamb and is now in the possession of his reward. And he sees me no longer detained in the Tower while he is walking by the waters of the Thames, but rather he beholds me on the waters still, tossed by various winds and storms, while he is secure of his own eternal happiness, and solicitous, as I hope, for mine."

These things, however, took place some time after the escape of Father Gerard, to the story of which we must now return.

CHAPTER XII

THE ESCAPE FROM THE TOWER

DURING all this time Father Gerard's imprisonment had been so rigid that he had seen none of his former friends save John Lilly, the lay brother, who knew the gaoler well and was allowed by him to bring the priest the necessaries of existence. But at length two ladies, who were devoted to their Father in God and ready to take any risk to see his face again, persuaded Lilly to let them go with him to the Tower, dressed as the wives of London citizens, under the pretence of visiting the gaoler's wife. He warned them of the extreme danger of this enterprise, but he could not deny the rumour they had heard that within a few weeks the priest was to be brought forth and executed. So these ladies, fully persuaded that this would be the last chance of a word with him who had brought them into the ways of peace, were determined to take the risk. It only remained to bribe the gaoler and his wife, and a new gown quickly won over the latter to the side of the would-be visitors.

On a certain Sunday afternoon they arrived at the gates of the Tower, and after he had shown them the lions and other beasts for which the place was

famous, the gaoler led the way to Father Gerard's cell.

As they drew near the spot where he was confined the two ladies began to be very heavy of heart, as they were quite sure this would be their last chance of speaking to the priest ; and when the door opened and they saw his face haggard with the long pains and confinement of his imprisonment, they ran forward with tears to kiss his feet. In vain he tried to prevent them ; their entreaties could not be withstood, though he insisted that their homage was paid to the prisoner of Christ, not to himself.

The pathetic little scene could not last long. They pressed into his distorted hands the gifts they had brought and hastened away at the anxious call of the gaoler, feeling that they had looked their last upon that face of kindly power and affection.

In this way there came to Father John the first intimation that he was about to die for his Faith. A little later came a letter, smuggled in by some means from his superior, Father Garnet, full of consolation, but warning him to prepare for the end. This news was further confirmed by the close examination that now took place in prison in preparation for the final trial.

The days passed on, however, and it began to seem unlikely that the trial would take place before the autumn session. So Father Gerard determined to use the time that was left him for still closer study

and meditation. One thing alone troubled him, and that not a little.

He had now been in the Tower nearly four months and had had no opportunity all that time of saying Mass. Indeed to do so seemed an utter impossibility, as the necessities, such as an altar stone, wafer bread and vestments, seemed quite unattainable.

Now while he was turning these things over in his mind Father Gerard had idly noticed that every day a certain prisoner used to come out of his cell for exercise on the leads of the Cradle Tower. These leads were only separated from the Salt Tower, where Father John lay, by a small garden, but they stood much lower, so that a loophole of the priest's cell, half-way up the latter, looked down upon them. At first Father Gerard had paid but little heed to his fellow-prisoner, but presently his attention was caught by the fact that the man, whoever he was, began to salute him each day and to wait with bowed head and bended knees, as though he were asking a blessing.

"Evidently he is a Catholic," mused the priest, as he gave the sign of blessing from the narrow slit of his window. With aroused interest he watched more closely and noted that from time to time a lady visited the Cradle Tower with a basket, which she carried away apparently empty. Presently he learnt from the gaoler that the man was a Mr John Arden, who had lain in prison on a charge of treason

for ten years, and that his wife was allowed to visit him at times to bring him changes of linen and other small comforts and necessities, without overmuch supervision.

It was on the Feast of St Ignatius, founder of his Order, in the end of that July, that Father Gerard suddenly made up his mind that, with the help of these people, he would once again say Mass.

One day as he stood at his window watching John Arden come out upon the leads below, he made a signal to the man to attend. He then took pen and paper and made as though he were writing something. Then he held the paper as though he were warming it at a fire, and presently made a show of reading it. Lastly, he wrapped up one of his crosses in it and made as it were to throw it over to him. He could easily have made himself heard had he chosen to call to him, but this he would not attempt, as what he said would at once have been heard by others ; but as Mr Arden nodded and smiled at him, he hoped he had made his meaning clear. He then began to petition his gaoler to carry a cross or rosary across to his fellow-prisoner, but of this the latter would not hear at first.

“ You see, sir,” said he, “ I have no proof that the gentleman over the way can keep a secret, and if his wife were to talk about it, so that it became known that I had done such a thing, it would be all over with me.”

But Father Gerard was not to be denied, and by

dint of bribes and persuasion he prevailed upon him to carry a letter written in orange juice in which a cross was wrapped.

Watching anxiously for some response, the priest soon saw Mr Arden appear on the leads, holding up the cross he had received and thanking him with signs. But as he made no attempt to answer the question in the note as to the possibility of getting materials for Mass, it seemed likely that he had not read the letter. So after waiting three days Father Gerard, having managed to attract his attention, began an elaborate bit of acting for his benefit.

Taking an orange, he squeezed the juice of it into a little cup, and after dipping a pen into it went through the action of writing. Then he turned away and held the paper to the fire, after which he went back to the window and appeared to be reading it attentively. Finally, by nods and signs, he made his fellow-captive understand that this was the procedure he wanted him to follow.

This time Mr Arden understood his meaning, read his letter and immediately replied with a note written in the same way. In this he said that if the gaoler would allow Father Gerard to visit him one evening and remain with him until the next day, he felt sure they could arrange that he should celebrate Mass. His wife, he said, would bring all that was necessary for the purpose.

In high spirits at this prospect, Father John attacked the gaoler on his very next visit to the cell.

“That gentleman opposite,” said he—“you know whom I mean—is very weary of his own society. So too am I of mine. His wife is bringing him a particularly good dinner one day this week. Will you not contrive that I should slip over and dine with him for once? He will see to it that you shall have your share of good things.”

But at the very idea the man turned pale.

“I dare not think of it, sir,” said he. “Why, you might well be seen as you cross the garden to the tower, and then where should I be?”

“Just where you are now,” said the priest, with his merry laugh. “It could well be shown that it was due to my cunning or ferocity and to no fault of yours. Besides, I would go after dark, and so should not be seen at all.”

“No, no, it would never do. The Lord Lieutenant might take it into his head to visit you that evening. What if he found you flown?”

“But as he never does visit me it is exceedingly improbable that he should choose that night to do so. Come, pluck up heart, man; feel this little purse and listen to its pleasant chink; do not refuse me such a simple request as this.”

At this the gaoler grinned and departed and Father Gerard knew he had won the day. Having fixed the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady as the date, he sent a note to Mr Arden and another to John Lilly, bidding the latter give to Mrs Arden, on her arrival, a pyx and a number of small hosts,

that the priest might be able to reserve the Blessed Sacrament.

These were duly carried by the lady to her husband, and after one more panic-stricken attempt on the part of the gaoler to prevent the visit, Father Gerard prevailed once more and rejoiced to get a good breath of the open air as he hurried across to the opposite tower.

The meeting between these two fellow-Catholics was touching in the extreme. It was nearly eleven years since Mr Arden had been thrown into prison, and since that day he had had no opportunity of hearing Mass or of making his confession and Communion.

Yet through him, acting as the instrument of Almighty God, he now not only obtained these privileges for himself, but enabled Father Gerard to attain the desire of his heart.

Very early next morning, within the walls of that little cell, the Divine Mysteries were celebrated, and the Prisoner of Love Himself came to take up His abode within those faithful and loving souls. During that Mass Father Gerard consecrated twenty-two particles, which he reserved in the pyx with a corporal, and these he took back with him to his cell, and so for three weeks was able to receive the Divine banquet with fresh delight and consolation.

It was during the happy day that followed that first memorable Mass that the priest, standing at his new friend's window, was struck by the nearness of

this particular part of the tower to the moat that cut the prison off from the outer world.

“Have you ever thought,” said he to Mr Arden, “that if a man had some true and real friend to assist him it would be by no means impossible to descend from the top of this building by a rope to the other side of the moat?”

“Certainly it could be done,” replied John Arden, “if one had friends who would not shrink from exposing themselves to danger to rescue one they loved.”

“There is no lack of such friends,” said Father John thoughtfully, “if only the thing is possible and worth trying.”

“As far as I am concerned,” said the other, “I should be only too glad to make the attempt. It would be far better for me, even if I had to lie in hiding for a long time, to get somewhere where I could enjoy the Sacraments and the company of Catholics, than to spend my life here in solitude within four walls.”

“Well, then,” said the priest, “let us commend the matter to God in prayer. In the meantime I will write to my superior, and what he thinks best I will do.”

Forthwith Father Gerard wrote to Father Garnet, telling him all the circumstances, and sent the letter through John Lilly. Very soon came a reply heartily approving of the project, provided it could be done without danger to life.

The next step was to send word to Mr Wiseman, with a warning to let as few as possible into the secret ; and Lilly and Fulwood, those faithful souls, were told that, if they were willing to expose themselves to such peril, they might come on a certain night to the moat opposite the little tower wherein Arden lay, which was close to the place where Francis Page had been taken prisoner.

They were to bring with them a rope, one end of which they were to tie to a stake. Then the prisoners from the top of the tower would throw over to them a ball of string attached to a lump of lead—string such as men use for sewing up bales of goods.

This must all be done on a dark night, but they would find the string by the noise it would make in falling. They would then attach this string to the free end of their rope, so that those on the farther side who had kept one end of the string would be able to haul up the rope. They were warned to wear on their breasts a white paper or kerchief, so that even in the dark they might be recognised as friends before the string was thrown.

They were also to be provided with a boat, in which they all might speedily depart from the dangerous spot.

But when all these arrangements had been made, the heart of Mr Arden began to fail him a little.

“ I think,” he wrote to the priest, “ that before facing this great peril we ought to try first whether we cannot bribe your gaoler to let you out, when you

could easily escape in disguise. As for me, you may be able to help me best from outside, and any way my safety matters little in comparison with yours."

Although he doubted the wisdom of the idea, Father Gerard agreed to make the attempt, and John Lilly forthwith was empowered to offer the gaoler one hundred pounds on the spot and ten pounds yearly for his life if he would agree to favour the priest's escape. But the man would not hear of such a proposal, saying he would be obliged to live as an outcast if he escaped himself and would be sure to be hanged if he were caught.

So they went on with their preparations according to the first plan, commending the matter to God by many prayers, in which they were joined by all those to whom the secret was committed. One of his friends, indeed, the heir to a vast estate, made a vow to fast once a week for the rest of his life if Father John escaped in safety.

The appointed night came, and the priest once more prevailed upon the gaoler, with bribes and treaties, to let him go across and visit his friend. Very soon he had locked them in with bolts and bars as usual and taken his departure for the night.

The first thing they then discovered was that, being by this time more than a little suspicious of them, he had also locked the inside door that led to the roof, and the only thing to be done was to try and loosen the bolt. This was done at length by working with their knives at the stone into which

the bolt was shot, and this took a long time to do. At length, however, it was done, and they were able to mount to the leads softly and without a light, for as a sentinel paced every night in the garden below, they dare not even speak to each other except in a very low whisper.

It was not a very dark night and about twelve o'clock they could dimly see the outline of a boat stealing softly up the river, in which boat sat three men with cloaks muffled over their faces. Steadily they drew nearer to the bank, but just as they were about to land a man came out of one of the poor cottages which stood upon the river's brink, and seeing the boat making for the shore hailed them, thinking them to be fishermen.

By the voices that replied Father Gerard recognised John Lilly and Richard Fulwood, while by the light of the lantern carried by the man on the bank he felt sure that the one who steered the boat was no other than the gaoler of his former prison, who, it will be remembered, had been converted by him to the true Faith.

It was not long before the cottager, suspecting nothing, returned to the house, but the boatmen dared not venture to land till they thought he had gone to bed and to sleep. So long did they paddle about, indeed, that it began to seem hopeless that they should do anything that night. By the look of the light in the window of the cottage it seemed as though they were being watched, and so, very

reluctantly, the rescuers rowed away down the river.

From the top of the tower Father John was sadly watching their movements, when he said suddenly to Arden :

“Something has happened ; they are in difficulties.”

It was *but* too true. The tide was now flowing so strongly that the boat had been forced against some piles fixed to break the force of the water, and so they were unable to go on or get back. And meantime the tide was still rising and bade fair to break the boat in pieces with the force of the waves.

From the top of the tower the prisoners could hear them shouting for help, and could see men coming out on the bank of the river with lanterns, running up and down and getting into boats to try and rescue them. The force of the current, however, was so great that they could not get near them and had to stand round them in a circle, looking on at their peril.

Said Father Gerard : “ I can hear the voice of my faithful Richard Fulwood. God grant he be not drowned, for we can ill spare a man such as he.”

“ And to think they are in this peril for our sakes,” groaned Mr Arden.

“ Let us pray most earnestly for their safety,” said the priest, and they began to put up fervent prayers to the throne of God. Presently he cried

again : “ See, they are letting down a light from the bridge and a basket attached to a rope wherein to draw them up. See, they are reaching up—no, they cannot stretch so far—they have given it up as hopeless. Surely nothing can save them now.”

But, as often before, man’s extremity became God’s opportunity, for there now came a strong sea-boat with six sailors, who managed to bring it up to the place of peril and took out Lilly and Fulwood. Immediately they had got out of it the boat capsized and the ex-gaoler was thrown into the water. However, in the mercy of God, he was able to catch hold of a rope that was thrown to him and so was drawn up and saved. And so, after this perilous adventure, they were all rescued and went back to their own homes.

This was a very sad ending to the high hopes of Father Gerard. He could scarcely expect them to run such a risk again, and when on the following morning the gaoler brought him a secret note from John Lilly, he fully expected him to say that it was clearly not the will of God that they should proceed further in this business. But to his delight the letter ran as follows :—

“ It was not the will of God that we should accomplish our designs last night ; still, He rescued us from a great danger that we might succeed better next time. What is put off is not cut off. With God’s help we mean to come again to-night.”

This was cheering news, and the chief thing now

was to get permission to remain another night in John Arden's cell.

What cajoleries Father John employed we can but guess. He was evidently a prime favourite with the gaoler, as much for his merry wit as for his gold, and though the man required much persuasion, he at length gave way and locked the prisoners together safely, as he thought, for the night.

His departure was hailed by sighs of relief.

"Every minute," cried Father John, "I feared his eye would soar to heaven as he so loudly professed his horror of bribery, and then would he at once have seen that we had loosened the stonework round the door to the leads."

One thing, however, in regard to this gaoler Father John had quite determined, and that was that he should not suffer for his good will if it could possibly be helped. He therefore wrote three letters to be left behind in the cell.

The first was to the gaoler himself, explaining that in making their escape they were but acting within their rights, since being innocent they were detained in prison, and for this reason they had said no word to him, because they knew it would be his duty to prevent them. The second letter was to the Lieutenant, and in this he still further exonerated the gaoler, declaring before God that he knew nothing of the escape, and that he certainly would have prevented it had he suspected anything. He confirmed this by mentioning the tempting offer that had been refused

by the man, and also told how the permission to visit another cell had been extorted from him with the greatest difficulty.

The third letter was to the Lords of the Council, stating the causes that had led them to regain the liberty which had been unjustly taken from them. "And this I have done," he wrote, "not from love of freedom so much as for love of souls, who are daily perishing in this land and whom I would bring back from sin and heresy. As for matters of State, as I have not meddled with them heretofore, so you may be sure that I shall continue in the same way."

Then once more with beating hearts they mounted again to the leads. This time the boat arrived and put in to the shore without anyone preventing it. The gaoler friend of Father Gerard remained in the boat and the other two scrambled on to the bank of the river with a heavy, strong, new rope. Then Father John threw the ball of string with the lead attached, which they caught and tied to the rope. But the prisoners now found great difficulty in pulling up the heavy coil, the other end of which by this time was fast tied to a stake on the bank.

Even when this was done there was still another element of danger. The distance between the tower and the stake proved to be so great that the rope was stretched horizontally rather than slopingly, so that they could not hope to slip down it as they had hoped, but would have to propel themselves along by some exertion of their own—no easy thing upon

a swaying rope. This they proved by experimenting with a bundle of clothing and books, which they put on the rope to see if it would slide down by its own weight. But it stuck fast at once and was pulled back and left behind.

At that point Mr Arden, who had hitherto been full of hope, began to lose heart in face of the great danger of the plan.

"However," he said at last, "I shall most certainly be hanged if I stay where I am now, for we cannot throw back the rope without its falling into the river and so betraying both us and our friends. So I will make the attempt, since I prefer to expose myself to danger with the chance of freedom, rather than remain here with the certainty of being hanged."

He was by far the lighter of the two, and so, as he thus stood a far better chance of safety, Father Gerard persuaded him to go first. He made the descent fairly easily, for he was a vigorous, strong man, and the rope was then quite taut.

His descent, however, slackened the rope very considerably and greatly increased the danger, as Father John was soon to discover.

Left alone upon the tower, Father John suddenly saw the rope jerk twice. It was the signal for him to make the descent in his turn, and having committed his soul to God, to Our Lady and to all his patrons, especially to Father Southwell, who had been imprisoned close by for three years before his martyrdom, he went over the top of the tower. Holding

the rope in his right hand, and also with his left arm, he twisted his legs about it in such a way that the rope passed between his knees. Thus lying as it were on his face he descended a few yards, when suddenly his body swung round by his own weight and he hung suspended under the rope. The shock was so great that he nearly lost his hold and fell into the river, for his hands and arms were still very weak from the effects of the torture, and he was, it will be remembered, a big and heavy man. For some moments he could hardly get on at all, for the rope hung slack and he was swaying heavily beneath it.

At last he managed to get as far as the middle of the rope, and there he stuck, his strength failing him and his head whirling with dizziness.

But after a little, and assisted by the prayers of the saints above and those of his friends waiting anxiously on the river bank below, he managed to get a little farther, and so with frequent stops he crawled onward till he got as far as the wall on the farther side of the moat. There, however, he stuck, helpless, for his feet only touched the top of the wall, and his whole body hung horizontally, while owing to the slackness of the rope his head was no higher than his heels.

In such a position, exhausted as he was, it was hopeless to get over the wall alone by his own strength. So John Lilly scrambled up somehow or other, took hold of his feet and pulled him

along by these till he got him over the wall to the ground.

But by this time poor Father Gerard was quite unable to stand, so they gave him restoratives and presently he managed to walk to the boat. First, however, he saw to it that they unfastened the rope from the stake and cut off a part of it so that the rest hung down from the tower roof. This was done, of course, to defer the moment of detection. It was a joyful little party which entered the boat, murmuring thanksgivings to God who had thus delivered them from the hand of the persecutors. And we may be sure that those who had exposed themselves to such perils had also a large share in those heartfelt thanksgivings.

The tower from which this thrilling escape took place was the Cradle Tower, some forty yards distant from the Salt Tower, where Father Gerard had been imprisoned. From the modern turret that now covers its remains we can see the moat, now almost empty, except in time of floods, and the wharf on the farther side where once stood the stone wall. The tower stands at the narrowest part of the moat, projecting some ten feet into it, and in those days there were only a few cottages on the farther side and those lower down the river. It was over the wall on the farther side that the prisoners threw the ball of lead and the string which served to draw up the rope.

We have only to see how low the Cradle Tower

stands, scarcely higher, indeed, than the opposite wall, to realise how little chance they had of sliding down the rope. However, all these obstacles had been successfully overcome, and they were now free men, after a captivity lasting in the one case twelve, and the other, three years.

CHAPTER XIII

A FAITHFUL SERVANT

It is characteristic of Father Gerard's tender heart that the first person he thought of after his escape was the gaoler, who might have to suffer for it.

The priest had made his way to Father Garnet's abode in the country, after seeing that Mr Arden was safely housed with Mistress Line in town ; but in the meantime he had told Richard Fulwood to get ready two horses at a certain spot in case they might be needed, and by another hand sent a letter to his gaoler.

This was given him at the usual meeting-place outside the Tower early next morning, and the man, thinking it was for Father Gerard, was about to return and visit his cell when the messenger stayed him, saying :

“ The letter is for you and not for anyone else.”

“ For me ? From whom, then, does it come ? ”

“ From a friend of yours, but who he is I don't know,” said the man, who was a stranger to Father Gerard.

The gaoler looked much surprised and said : “ I cannot read, so if this is a matter that requires immediate attention, please read it to me.”

In the letter read to him Father Gerard told him briefly that he had escaped, and that though he was within his rights to do so, he was loth to leave the gaoler in the lurch because of his former kindness. If he wanted safety, therefore, there was a horse and guide awaiting him to conduct him to a place far from London, where he should be maintained in comfort for the rest of his life. If he accepted this offer he urged him to lose no time, but to settle his affairs and repair at once to the place to which the messenger would guide him.

The gaoler had not the courage of his former prisoner, and fell to shaking with fright. "I accept his offer ; oh yes, a hundred times," said he ; " but I must go back and tell my wife and get her away with me."

" Make haste then," said his guide, and the man ran off to the Tower. But on the way he met a fellow-gaoler, who said to him : " Be off with you as quick as you can, for your prisoners have escaped and Master Lieutenant is looking for you everywhere. Woe be to you if he finds you ! "

So he returned trembling to the messenger and besought him for the love of God to take him to a place of safety. He was at once led to the place where Richard Fulwood was waiting with the horses, and quickly mounting these they rode together to a spot some hundred miles from London. In that place lived a friend of the priest, who had been asked to look after and maintain the man, but not at first to

put full confidence in him or to let him talk about his late prisoners.

But the gaoler had been deeply impressed by the brave young priest, who had often talked to him of things divine, even when racked by almost unbearable pain. "Though his reason was convinced I was never able to move his will," wrote Father Gerard of his connection with him in prison; but now that he was forcibly removed by God's hand from his former surroundings that stubborn will gave way. At the end of a year the gaoler was received into the Church, and removing with his wife and family into another place for safety, lived there comfortably upon the pension paid him by Father Gerard till his death.

Meantime, no great hue and cry had been made after the escaped prisoners. One member of the Council, when the news was reported by the agitated Lieutenant, said openly that he was glad Gerard had got off.

Others pointed out the hopelessness of hunting for him. "If he has such determined friends as to accomplish what they have," said they, "depend upon it they will have made further arrangements, and provided horses and hiding-places to keep him quite out of your reach."

So after a few days Father Gerard actually returned to London, lying hid by day either at the house of the Wisemans, close by the Clink Prison, or at that of Mistress Line. His nights were spent in

helping and teaching those who needed him, and here he remained for some time, bringing many souls to God.

But both these houses were too well known as the resorts of Jesuits to be safe, and the priest now decided to share a house with a prudent friend, where he had a "fair chapel well provided and ornamented," and where he could receive a needy Catholic for a night or two if necessary. The need for the change was shown by a narrow escape from being again taken prisoner that befell him at this time.

It will be remembered that a certain apostate priest named Atkinson had been the means of getting Father Gerard committed to the Tower. This wretched man was now fired with the desire of recapturing him, and possibly at the same time laying hands on Father Blackwell, the Archpriest, who had lately escaped from the prison of the Marshalsea. Suspecting that Father Gerard was at the house of Mistress Line, and hoping to get evidence against her as well, he began to send letters to the priest professing his penitence and need of reconciliation, and begging him to see him for his soul's good. For some time Father Gerard put him off, until the letters grew more urgent, and Atkinson began to complain that the priest held him in contempt and cared nothing for his salvation.

There was just a chance that he might really be in good faith, so, although he had but little hope of him,

Father Gerard sent him word a day or two after he had left Mistress Line's house, to say he must come at once with the messenger if he wished to see him.

He warned the messenger, however, not to permit any delay, nor to allow him to write anything nor address anyone on the way, if he wished to have an interview with him. He arranged, moreover, that he should not be brought to any house, but to a certain field near one of the Inns of Court, which was a common promenade, and that the messenger should walk there alone with him till he came.

The meeting was at night, when there was a bright moon. Arriving with two stalwart friends in case the fellow should attack him unawares, the priest entered the field not far from the house of a well-known Catholic, in whose house, though unknown to Gerard, the Archpriest Blackwell was then in hiding. Atkinson was already waiting and watching for him and at once concluded that he had come from this same house. It did not take Father Gerard long to discover that there was nothing genuine in the man's professed repentance and they soon parted. But within a day or two both the house adjoining the Inns of Court and that of Mistress Line were surrounded and searched by the Lieutenant of the Tower in person. Father Blackwell had a very narrow escape, having only just time to get into a cleverly concealed hiding-place; and the friends of Father Gerard rejoiced that by removing a few days

earlier to his new abode he had eluded the snare set by his Judas friend.

It was difficult, however, for one of the priest's ardent temperament to play a wary part, and about this time his superior, Father Garnet, thought of sending him to a place of safety out of England. This was a bitter blow to Father Gerard and not to be borne without such strong protest as apparently broke down his superior's resolve.

"Father Gerard is much dismayed this day when I wrote to him to prepare himself to go," wrote Father Garnet to Rome in March, 1598. "He came to me of purpose. Indeed he is very profitable to me, and his going would be wondered at. I hope he will walk warily enough. You know my mind ; if you think it good, I desire his stay."

In the meantime Father Gerard, in spite of his promises to be extra careful, made more frequent excursions than usual.

One of these excursions was to the house of a lady of noble birth, Elizabeth Vaux, daughter-in-law of Lord Vaux of Harrowden, the head of a great Catholic family. This lady had lost her husband some four years earlier and ever since had been so overwhelmed with grief that the care of her young son was her only link with the ordinary life of the world.

To her came Father Gerard, in order to rouse her from her state of inordinate grief and to turn her mind to higher things than were concerned with

her own personal troubles. Very soon he had won her entire confidence and affection ; so much so that when she recognised how she might give him valuable aid in his work of converting and strengthening souls she placed herself at his entire disposal.

She was too well known as a Catholic for her house in town to be a safe centre for such work, and she proposed, therefore, to take one in the country, where she and her people, together with newly made converts or inquirers, might live a kind of collegiate life under Father Gerard's guidance. After much search she found a beautiful and secluded place at Stoke Poges, in Buckinghamshire, which she took, and was proceeding to furnish in suitable fashion, when an adventure overtook the Jesuit which very nearly ended their scheme once and for all.

In their relations with families who were accustomed to keep a good many servants there was always the danger of betrayal from the latter, some of whom were non-Catholics, some "false brethren."

Among Mistress Vaux' retainers was one such man, who resented from the first the stricter discipline and more thorough supervision that were the result of Father Gerard's influence over his mistress. He was a great talker too, and just before Mistress Vaux went down to furnish the house at Stoke Poges, taking him with her for safety, he told a "false brother" that the Jesuit had lately come to live at his lady's house and had begun to regulate the whole household. He added that though his lady was

about to leave for the country, the priest was staying behind for a time at the house he shared with friends in town, and he described a visit he had paid to that house with his mistress.

All this was faithfully retailed by the renegade Catholic to the Council.

Meantime Father Gerard had been busy giving the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius to two gentlemen who were thinking of giving themselves entirely to God as Jesuits, and was now making his own spiritual retreat. One afternoon about four o'clock John Lilly, that most faithful of brothers, rushed into his room without knocking and with a drawn sword in his hand.

"What on earth is the matter?" asked the priest.

"It is a matter of searching the house."

"What house?"

"This very house—and they are in it already."

They had, indeed, made an easy entrance. They knocked very gently and then, when the servant opened the door, they all rushed in at once and began to scatter in every direction.

While John was telling him this, up came the searching party, together with the mistress of the house, to the very room in which they were. Now just opposite Father John's room was the chapel, so that from the passage the door of the chapel opened on one hand and that of his room on the other. The magistrates then, seeing the door open, went in and found there an altar richly adorned, and the priestly

vestments laid out close by, so handsome as to cause expressions of admiration from the heretics themselves.

In the meantime Father Gerard, in the room opposite, was quite at his wits' end what to do, for there was no hiding-place in the room, nor any means of exit save by the open passage where the enemy was. However, he changed the cassock he was wearing for a secular coat, but his books and manuscript meditations, which he had there in considerable quantities, he was quite unable to conceal.

They stood there with their ears close to the chink of the door, listening to catch what the new-comers said, and he heard one exclaim from the chapel :

“ Good God, what have we found here ! And I had not even thought of coming to this house to-day ! ”

From this he concluded that it was a mere chance search without a special warrant, and probably, therefore, they had but few men with them.

So they began to consult together whether it were not better to rush out with drawn swords, seize the keys from the searching party and so escape, for they would have had Master Lee (Father Gerard's friend and pupil) and the master of the house to help them, besides two or three men-servants. Moreover, Father John considered if they were taken in the house the master would certainly be visited with a far greater punishment than that which the law prescribes for resistance to a magistrates' search.

While they were there deliberating the searchers

came to the door of the room and knocked. They made no answer, but pressed the latch hard down, for the door had no bolt or lock. As they continued knocking, the mistress of the house said : " Perhaps the man-servant who sleeps in that house may have taken away the key. I will go and look for him."

" No, no," said they ; " you go nowhere without us, or you will be hiding away something."

And so they went with her, not staying to examine whether the door had a lock or not !

When they got below stairs the mistress of the house, who had great presence of mind, took them into a room in which were some ladies, the sisters of Mistress Vaux and Mistress Line ; and while the magistrates were questioning these ladies she ran up to the priest, saying :

" Quick ! Quick ! Get into the hiding-place ! "

She had scarcely said this and ran down again before the searchers had missed her and were for remounting the stairs.

But she stood in their way on the bottom step, so that they immediately suspected what the case was and were eager to get past. This, however, they could not do without laying forcible hands on the lady, a thing which, as gentlemen, they shrank from doing. One of them, however, as she stood there purposely occupying the whole width of the stairway, thrust his head past her, in hopes of seeing what was going on above-stairs. And, indeed, he almost caught sight of Father John as he passed

along to the hiding-place. For as soon as he heard the lady's words of warning the priest opened the door and with the least possible noise mounted from a stool to the hiding-place, which was arranged in a secret gable of the roof. When he had mounted there he bade John Lilly come up also ; but he, more careful of the priest than of himself, refused to follow him, saying : " No, Father, I shall not come. There must be someone to own the books and papers in your room ; otherwise, upon finding them, they will never rest till they have found you too."

So spoke this truly faithful and prudent servant, so full of charity as to offer his life for his friend. There was no time for further words. The priest acquiesced reluctantly and closed the small trap-door by which he had entered, but he could not open the door of the inner hiding-place, so that he would infallibly have been taken if they had not found John Lilly, and mistaking him for a priest ceased from any further search. For this was what happened. Scarcely had he removed the stool by which Father John had mounted, and gone back to the room and shut the door, when the two chiefs of the searching party again came upstairs and knocked violently at the door, ready to break it open if the key were not found. Then that intrepid soldier of Christ threw open the door and presented himself undaunted to the persecutors.

" Who are you ? " they asked.

" A man, as you see."

“But what are you? Are you a priest?”

“I do not say I am a priest,” replied John; “that is for you to prove. But I am a Catholic, certainly.”

Then they found there on the table all Father Gerard’s meditations, his breviary and many Catholic books, and, what was most grievous of all to lose, his manuscript sermons and notes for sermons which he had been writing or compiling for the last ten years, which he made more account of, perhaps, than they did of all their money.

After examining all these they asked whose they were.

“They are mine,” said John.

“Then there can be no doubt you are a priest. And this cassock—whose is this?”

“That is a dressing-gown—to be used for convenience now and then.”

Convinced now they had caught a priest, they carefully locked up all the books and writings in a box, to be taken away with them; then they locked the chapel door and put their seal upon it, and taking John by the arm led him downstairs and delivered him into custody of their officers.

Now when he entered with his captors into the room where the ladies were, he, who at other times was wont to conduct himself with humility and stand uncovered in such company, now, on the contrary, after saluting them, covered his head and sat down. Nay, assuming a sort of authority, he said to

the magistrates: "These are noble ladies: it is your duty to treat them with consideration. I do not indeed know **them**, but it is quite evident that they are entitled to the greatest respect."

The ladies, therefore, seeing Father Gerard was safe, and noting also John's assumed dignity, could scarce refrain from showing their joy. They made no account of the loss of property or of the annoyance they would have to undergo from the suspicion of having had a priest in the house. They wondered, indeed, and rejoiced, and almost laughed to see John playing the priest, for so well did he do it as to deceive those deceivers and to divert them from further search.

John Lilly, as well as the master of the house, was then carried off, and meantime, with much rejoicing, Father Gerard was brought out of his hiding-place and hurried away as soon as might be to the country house of Mistress Vaux.

He was, however, in great anxiety as to the fate of his faithful servant, as **he** might well be. For inquiries into the past soon proved that John Lilly had already spent eight or nine years in the Clink as a "notorious recusant," and had moreover been the person who had communicated with Father Gerard in the Tower.

Furious at being thus tricked, not by a priest but by a priest's servant, and guessing that Father Gerard must have been hidden all the while in the house they had searched, they committed him to the Tower.

In due time he was "examined," when he joyfully confessed that it was he who had helped the priest to escape and would gladly do the same again if opportunity came. But when they ordered him to say what places Gerard had since visited, and where he might now be found, he had not a word to say, and to their threats he only replied :

"It is a thing that with the help of God I will never do. You have me in your power ; do what God permits you."

For three hours he was hung up like his master before him, suffering the most cruel pain ; but as he uttered never a word, they became convinced that such treatment was useless and threatened him with death instead. Meantime, as he lay imprisoned there, he became the means of saving the life of another priest.

In the course of one of his examinations Wade, the chief persecutor, asked him if he knew Father Garnet.

"No," said John.

"No !" said Wade, with a sour smile. "And you don't know his house in the Spital either, I suppose. I don't mind letting you know, now that I have you safe, that I am acquainted with his residence and that we are sure of having him here in a day or two to keep you company. For when he comes to London he puts up at that house, and then we shall catch him."

John heard all this with secret dismay, for he saw

that his superior's residence had been betrayed. When he returned to his cell he obtained leave to send some small article wrapped in a piece of blank paper to a friend.

The friend, a Catholic, privately smoothed out the paper and held it to the fire, and found thereon a letter saying that the residence of Father Garnet had been betrayed and that he must be warned at once. This was done and the priest's life was saved. When they searched the house they found it empty, for the warning had given the chance of removing all his books and papers, so that nothing was found against him.

After four months in the Tower John Lilly was sent to Newgate, and as this was usually the preliminary to martyrdom, Father Gerard was more than ever anxious for his friend and servant.

Imagine then his delight when, on hearing one night a cautious tap at his door, he opened it to come face to face with John himself.

It seemed that in Newgate he had met a certain priest who asked him to aid him to escape, and on turning his attention to the matter he found a way by which they could escape together.

Truly bars could not hold nor chains bind these gallant adventurers in the service of Almighty God.

It was not safe to keep him long in England, for he was now a marked man, so, shortly after, he was sent to Rome, where he was admitted as a Jesuit lay brother. He returned later on to England, where

he died of consumption a short time before Father Gerard finished his autobiography (1609).

“Truly his was an innocent soul,” says the priest of him, “and endowed also with great prudence and cleverness.”

CHAPTER XIV

PRIEST-HUNTING AND SOUL-HUNTING

THE adventure recorded in the last chapter was quickly followed by another. For in those days priest-hunting was with some members of the Council, as with county magistrates, a pleasant and profitable pastime, excelling in interest the joys of hawking or riding to hounds.

When the members of the Council found how narrowly they had missed apprehending Father Gerard at his London residence, they came to the conclusion that the priest must be at the country house belonging to the lady whose servants' gossip had been brought to their knowledge. So they issued a commission to some Justices of the Peace in that county, who, hearing that Mrs Vaux had taken a grand house near Stoke Poges, not unnaturally concluded that this was for the purpose of harbouring priests, and that in this spot Father Gerard was to be found.

As a matter of fact, the priest had gone over there from Mrs Vaux' own residence almost directly he returned from London, and, together with his hostess and the two faithful lay brothers, Little John

and Hugh Sheldon, was planning how and where to construct the necessary "priest holes" or hiding-places, in the making of which Little John excelled.

Later in the day came one of the servants to his mistress and besought her earnestly to return with Father Gerard to her own house by a different road from that which they had come.

"There is danger ahead," said he, "for there were those on our path as we came hither who marked us down as we passed by. They will think, however, that we are spending the night here if we return by another way."

So, leaving Little John and Hugh Sheldon to carry on their work, Mrs Vaux persuaded Father Gerard to follow his advice. Yet he was so reluctant to take precautions that he did not go into hiding on his return, but went about the house as usual.

Meantime early next morning the Justices were at the Stoke Poges house for their search. But, although they had a number of men with them, they did not guard all the outlets, so that Little John was able to escape. But Hugh Sheldon was caught and when he refused to answer questions was imprisoned and finally exiled.

When, however, the Justices found the bird they had marked down had again flown, they came hot-foot to the house inhabited by Mrs Vaux.

They arrived at the dinner-hour and, being admitted by the carelessness of the porter, got into the hall before those at table had any warning.

Now, as the lady of the house was not very well that morning, they were going to take their dinner in the room used by Father Percy, a Jesuit priest who had for some time been Father John's companion, with Master Roger Lee, his friend and pupil.

So when they heard who had come, that they were in the great hall, and that Lord Vaux himself, who was but a boy at that time, could not prevent them from intruding into his room, though he was also unwell, Father Gerard made a pretty shrewd guess what they had come about, and snatching up such things as wanted hiding, he made the best of his way to the priests' hole, together with Father Percy and Roger Lee.

But they had to pass by the very door of the room in which the enemy were even then waiting and exclaiming that they would wait no longer.

One of the pursuivants even opened the door and looked out, and some of the servants said afterwards that he must have seen Father John as he passed.

But God certainly interposed, for it was surely not to be expected from natural causes that men, who had come eager to search the house at once, and were loudly declaring that they would do so, should stay in a room where they were not locked in just as long as was necessary for the priests to hide themselves, and then come forth as if they had been let loose, intrude upon the lady of the house, and course through all the rooms like bloodhounds after their prey.

These authorities searched the house thoroughly

that whole day, but found nothing. At last they retired disappointed and wrote to the Council what they had done. Mrs Vaux soon discovered who had done the mischief and discharged him, but without unkindness. Father John gave out also that he should quit the place altogether, and for a time they practised particular caution on all points.

One of these points involved the giving up of the fine new house that Mrs Vaux had thought to take, since the Justices and other country folk had declared that they would never allow her to live in peace if she came there, since her only object was to harbour priests. She therefore decided to build for the Fathers a separate wing attached to her own original home and close to the old chapel built by former barons of the ancient Vaux family.

The place was exceedingly convenient, and so free from observation that from their rooms they could step out into the private garden, and thence through spacious walks into the fields, where they could mount their horses and ride whither they would.

From this centre the priest could exercise to the full his own beloved pastime of "soul-hunting." His method was to get an introduction to some large household where "game" was plentiful, and where, if the majority of the inhabitants were heretics, he usually went disguised as an ordinary country gentleman. When he had established himself on friendly terms he would lose no opportunity of

turning the mind of mistress or master to matters of Catholic faith and practice. These were indeed burning questions in those days and not difficult to introduce into conversation, but the results, terminating, as they did, not only in the conversion of souls but the making of most ardent converts, were nothing less than marvellous.

Thus on one occasion Father John began to visit the house of Sir Everard Digby, a gentleman of the Queen's Court, who cared for nothing but dancing in town and hawking in the country. His wife and both their families were thorough-going heretics, and no more unpromising field for conversion could be imagined.

Roger Lee happened to know this young man slightly, and Father Gerard soon made friends with him over hunting, hawking and card-playing. Coming often to the house, they soon began to discuss matters of religion, though even then most of the talking was done by Roger Lee, and Sir Everard was so far from suspecting that Father Gerard was a priest that he consulted Master Lee as to whether he would be a good match for his sister, whom he wished to see married to a Catholic, "for he looked on Catholics as good and honourable men." His wife, however, was the first actually to wish to become a Catholic and told Father Gerard she should like to speak with a priest. With a quiet smile he told her he would try and arrange for her to do so, and meantime offered to teach her to examine her

conscience "as I myself," said he, "was taught to do by an experienced priest."

When he knew her to be in earnest he told Roger Lee to tell her the truth, which she at first refused to believe. "How is it possible he can be a priest? Has he not lived among us rather as a courtier? Has he not played at cards with my husband, and played well too, which is impossible for those not accustomed to the game? Has he not gone out hunting with my husband and frequently in my hearing spoken of the hunt in proper terms, without tripping, which no one could do who had not been trained to it?"

To all of which Master Lee replied: "It is true that he did and said all you say, and unless he had done so how could he have gained entrance here and conversed with you and by his conversation brought you to the Faith? For if he had presented himself as a priest (which he would much prefer, were it feasible), how would your father or you yourselves have allowed his introduction?"

Then at length she confessed herself satisfied.

"You will find him, however," added Master Lee, "quite a different man when he has put off his present character."

This she acknowledged next day when she saw him in his cassock.

This lady not only became a most devout Catholic, but she never rested till she had drawn her husband too "into St Peter's net."

It happened that Sir Everard had fallen very ill in town, and as his wife was preparing to go and nurse him she suggested that the priest should go a little before her and try to find an opportunity of informing her husband of her conversion. Father Gerard had a cheery talk with the sick man, and, without mentioning his wife, found him inclined and ready to receive instruction.

Before Lady Digby could arrive he had been received, after which his one anxiety was that his wife should also become a Catholic. Father Gerard smiled at this but said nothing at that time, being determined to wait till his wife came up to town that he might see how each loving soul would strive to win the other.

His joy at finding his wife already within the Church must have gone far to effect his cure.

Besides these country-side conversions there were many others made in London. In spite of the dangers awaiting him there, Father Gerard still had his headquarters in the capital, though he was now a little more cautious in his arrangements. He had a house of his own, managed by a Protestant who, notwithstanding, served him well and faithfully. For, as we have seen, the priest was popular with everyone, and gaolers, servants, schismatics loved him and served him gladly.

He was, of course, obliged to be very cautious. When he came to town he always entered the house after dark, and in summer-time scarcely ever went

out while he was there. But his friends would come to visit him by ones and twos on different days, that no special attention might be drawn to the house from the number of visitors. By this means he provided better for them and for himself and was able to continue longer in this way of life.

The conversion of one who went from this house to the Jesuit Noviciate in Rome is particularly interesting.

A young Oxford man named Mr Thomas Smith was acting as tutor to the young Baron Vaux, son of Father Gerard's hostess, and had had many opportunities in this country of conversing with the priest. But he was in that dangerous state of mind when, convinced as he was that the Catholic faith was the only true one, he yet could not make up his mind to renounce heresy and to enter a Church where persecution and worldly loss might well be his lot. Nothing Father Gerard could say seemed to move him in the least. "He seemed," said the priest of him, "to sleep a heavy and lethargic slumber, so that one might easily recognise the power of the strong man armed keeping his house in peace. However, a stronger than he came upon him, and this stronger One who overcame him was no other than the Child who was born and given to us. For on the night of Our Lord's Nativity he alone of all remained in bed. But he could not sleep and began to feel an overpowering shame, seeing that even the three boys whom he taught had risen and were

engaged in praising God, thus teaching their master, not by words, but by deeds."

Roused, therefore, in his heart, by the cradle cries of the Divine Infant, he began to think with himself how much time he had hitherto lost, and how the very boys and the unlearned were entering into God's kingdom before him. So, trembling and eager to lose no more time, he rose at once, came to the chapel door, knocked and asked to speak to Father Gerard.

As the priest was engaged he sent him a message, asking him to wait till the morning, when he should be at his service. But he would not listen, and sent back word that he must speak with him at once. Father John therefore bade him have a little patience, and when he had finished Matins he came out to him as he was, dressed in his alb. When Thomas Smith saw him he threw himself at his feet and said, with the tears streaming down his cheeks :

"Oh, Father, I beseech you, for the love of God, to hear my confession."

Wondering at the strangeness of the thing, Father John bade him be of good heart—that he would hear him at a proper time, but that he must first prepare himself well for it.

"Oh, Father," he cried, "I have put it off too long already ! Do not bid me delay any more."

"It is well," replied the priest, "that you feel the necessity of instant diligence. But it is not delaying to take a fair and moderate time for preparation. Nay, the confession and absolution would not be

good if preparation and examination are omitted when they might easily have been made."

"Well, but," urged he, "I may die before the time of confession."

"Then I will answer for you before God," said Father John. "Do you in the meantime conceive in your heart a true sorrow for having offended our good Lord."

Upon this he yielded and retired, still weeping, and after one or two days' diligent examination of conscience he made his confession, and, being reconciled, celebrated with them the conclusion of the feast, the beginning of which he had lost.

To Father Gerard's London house came also another young man urgently wanting to make his confession. This was the young Earl of Clanricarde, a Catholic, though by no means a fervent one; and since by his own admission he was accustomed to approach the Sacraments only twice or thrice in the year, the priest advised him to wait a few days in order to make a more thorough examination of conscience. He listened gravely to the Father's advice and then replied:

"I would willingly follow your counsel if it were possible; it is, however, impossible to put off my present confession."

"Why is it impossible?" asked the priest.

"Because to-morrow I shall be in circumstances of danger and I desire to prepare myself by confession to-day!"

“What danger is this,” asked Father Gerard, “to which you will be exposed?”

“There is a gentleman at Court,” he replied, “who has grievously insulted me, so that I was compelled in defence of my honour to challenge him to single combat, and we meet to-morrow at an appointed spot some distance from town.”

Somewhat horrified at this announcement, the priest urged the young Earl to give up his aim of vengeance, reminding him that what he contemplated was not only a sin, but was punishable by excommunication. To which this delightful youth listened with grave politeness and only replied: “It is impossible to withdraw now, for the thing is known to many and has been taken even before the Queen, who has expressly forbidden us to pursue the matter any further.”

Concealing his inward amusement at this remarkable attitude, Father Gerard still did his best to persuade his would-be penitent to give up his ambition, but in vain.

“I implore you, Father,” said he, unmoved, “to pray for me and to hear my confession if you possibly can.”

“That I certainly cannot,” replied the priest, “for that honour which you worship is not necessary to you. But this is what I will do. I will give you from my reliquary a particle of the Holy Cross, enclosed with an Agnus Dei, and you shall wear it upon you. Perhaps God may have mercy

on you for the sake of this and give you time for penance."

It was clearly a case of "looking on the young man and loving him," in spite of his perverse self-will, and the Earl went off to his duel very gratefully, having reverently fastened the relic within his shirt.

It happened that his adversary made a lunge at his heart and pierced his shirt, but did not touch his skin. He, on his side, wounded and prostrated his enemy, then gave him his life and came off victorious. He forthwith returned to Father Gerard in high spirits and told him how he had been preserved by the power of the Holy Cross ; then he thanked him very earnestly and promised to be more on his guard for the future.

This charming young man afterwards married the only daughter of Walsingham, bitterest of persecutors and most bigoted of Protestants ; and she, owing to her husband's influence, became, like him, an ardent Catholic.

After three years Father Gerard gave up this house in town and took another, this time in the Strand, "in the fields behind St Clement's Inn." It was here that the events took place which led eventually to the departure of the priest from England.

CHAPTER XV

THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

THE long reign of Elizabeth of England was nearly over and the great Queen, now but a withered, haggard old woman, lay huddled upon her death-bed. A terrible end was hers, haunted as it was by the remembrance of gallant martyrs, men and women, whom her caprice and obstinacy had sent to the bloodstained gallows. And one of her bitterest pangs must have been the knowledge that the news of her death would be the cause of unfeigned rejoicing to many of her most noble and loyal subjects, who yet owned a measure of loyalty greater still to the Faith for which the martyrs died.

The Catholics of England had much to hope from her successor. He had, it is true, been brought up in the strictest sect of Scottish Presbyterianism, but it was said that he had for this body nothing but contempt and dislike. On the other hand, he was the son of an ardent Catholic mother, Mary Queen of Scots, who had been for many a long day the hope of Catholic England, and who was even regarded by many as a martyr for the cause of her faith. Would not James of Scotland and England look with favour, or at any rate with impartial eyes, upon those who

held his mother's religion and see that they had fair play ? Among those who were of this opinion Father Gerard might well stand, for we find him writing at this time :

“ It is well known to all how those of my blood have loved and served King James. My father knew it to his cost, for he was twice imprisoned for attempting to set free the glorious Queen Mary, the King's mother, and to secure the succession to the Ministers of State ; so that besides imprisonment, to purchase his life of them cost some thousands of crowns, especially the first time, when there were but three accused, and he one of them, and of the other two one lost his life.

“ Of all of which King James was mindful when he came from Scotland to be crowned King of England and my brother at York offered him his service and that of all his house. ‘ I am particularly bound,’ said he, ‘ to love your blood, on account of the persecution that you have borne for me,’ and of that his love he there gave him the first pledge by making him a knight.”

Within two years of James' accession, however, Father John Gerard lay under an accusation of a most serious nature, being nothing less than that of high treason, an accusation we have every reason to believe to be absolutely false and utterly foreign to the nature of one who had always been a loyal English gentleman as well as an ardent Catholic.

Very few months had elapsed after the accession of James, when it became abundantly clear that the severity of the persecution of the Catholics in England was not only not relaxed, but that it was to be more severe than ever.

Rumours were rife, indeed, that in the Parliament of 1605 new laws were to be enacted against them which would make life well-nigh intolerable. Already they had been rendered helpless by the laws that forbade them to carry arms of any description and that took from them almost all their means of living. Disappointment acted as a goad, and many of the "younger and more impatient sort," says Father Gerard, "forgetting at last that patience in which we ought to possess our souls, and not enduring any longer to see sacred things trodden underfoot and the faithful robbed of their goods and loaded with innumerable evils, to the daily lamentable ruin of weak souls, determined to raise the people of God from this disastrous state, and to wage war in strictest secrecy against the enemies of their own souls and bodies and of the Catholic cause. . . . Thus it was that these persons I speak of, wishing to deliver themselves and others from this terrible slavery of body and soul, devised this plot, which they thought the only possible way of accomplishing what they wished—viz. by taking off at a single blow all the chief enemies of the Catholic cause."

He says not one word that could show sympathy with their aim, though he sees but too clearly the

strong temptation under which these young and ardent souls had laboured.

Nothing could make premeditated murder anything but a deadly sin, nothing could excuse it, not even the knowledge of those souls who were daily falling away from the Faith and wringing the heart of the priest who had been their guide and helper. That his disapproval was taken for granted is shown by the fact that Sir Everard Digby, one of his most intimate friends and converts, when they met a few days before the attempted "blow," told him nothing and replied to his close questioning with every possible evasion.

The Gunpowder Plot, as everyone knows, had as its aim the blowing up of King and Parliament when it met on 6th November for its first session. A certain number of young Catholic gentlemen plotted with a few men who, like the soldier of fortune, Guy Fawkes, were moved to take part more from a spirit of adventure than from a deep, religious motive. And aided by the money and sympathy of others in the country, they superintended the piling of gunpowder kegs in a vault or cellar below the House of Lords, which kegs they were prepared to ignite when the members assembled to hear the King's address. How this was discovered, first by a mysterious letter sent to Lord Mountague by his cousin warning him not to attend Parliament, and then by the search which found Fawkes with his lantern in the cellar, is too well known to need

repetition here. What is of more interest to us is the fact that the discovery led to the death of four at least of those who have played a part in the story of Father Gerard, and very nearly brought about that of the priest himself.

Throughout the story the disapproval of the plot and the absolute lack of complicity of Jesuits in it is clear to all but the most prejudiced observers. To begin with we find Robert Catesby, the originator of the whole plot, disclosing the matter in confession beforehand to one of the Fathers, who refused to hear him any further he was allowed unless to inform his superior. The latter, Father Garnet, not only ordered the priest to prevent his penitent from going further with it, but wrote to the Pope, urging him to forbid Catholics to take any measures of violence against their persecutors.

Yet directly the plot was discovered, a proclamation was issued against Father Garnet, Father Gerard and Father Oldcorne, whom we last saw setting off to join his superior in London when he and Gerard first landed in England.

News of their danger had already reached them, and Father Garnet and Father Oldcorne, who were then staying at the superior's house at Henlip, together with two lay brothers of the Society, took refuge in a priests' hole, where they lay hid for twelve days.

The full story of their adventures and of their subsequent apprehension must be told elsewhere.

They were brought up to London, examined and tortured. Father Oldcorne in particular was singled out for most cruel oppression, being hung up by the hands for five hours together for five days. Then although nothing whatever could be proved against him save that he was a priest, he was taken to Worcester, where he died a martyr's death.

Still more cruel, because a mental torture, was the browbeating and bullying of the gentle old Father Garnet before the Council. Even King James, a spectator of the horrid scene, said the Jesuit had not had fair play, while those who witnessed his brave and touching demeanour on the gallows almost relented towards him.

Of the two lay brothers, one, Rodolph Ashby by name, died a joyful death in company with Father Oldcorne, whose attendant he had always been.

The other was our old friend Little John, that clever contriver of hiding-places who had saved the lives of many a priest. It was well known to his persecutors that if he could be brought to disclose all he knew he could do more harm to Catholics and "discover more priests" than anyone in England. So they left no kind of torture untried, with the only result that their victim at length died under their hands. Even then they still tried to injure his brave soul, for they gave out that he had committed suicide for fear of greater torture. But no Catholic would believe that he who endured unspeakable torture rather than betray others would offend his God by

suicide instead of suffering the last extremity at their hands.

We must now return to Father Gerard, who, as the friend of Sir Everard Digby, was the chief suspect from the first.

When, under extreme torture, a "confession" was wrung from the lips of the conspirator Thomas Winter, he said that the little band of those concerned in the plot met at a "house behind St Clement's" to take the oath of secrecy and to receive Holy Communion.

That this was Father Gerard's house is clear ; it is also clear that other priests were in the habit of using it, for he says himself that he would have remained there free of suspicion if some friends of his, while he was absent from London, had not availed themselves of it rather rashly.

From Fawkes' confession we find that the priest whose Mass the conspirators heard "was not acquainted with their purpose," and though both he and Winter mentioned Father Gerard's name, it does not appear that either of them knew him by sight or could be certain that it was he who said the Mass.

On the other hand, we have Father Gerard's solemn assurance given in letters both to certain Lords of the Council and also to his own superiors. Thus, writing to the Bishop of Chalcedon, he says these words :

"This is the simple, naked truth : I was totally

ignorant of the provision of gunpowder and of the mine ; I was and I am as innocent of this and of every other conspiracy as your lordship or any man living, and this I affirm and swear upon my soul."

But all this counted for nothing in the eyes of those who were eager for his blood. He had been for years a marked man, extraordinarily clever in his escapes, bringing indeed not a little ridicule and confusion upon the authorities by his skilful evasion of their discipline. Directly then the plot was discovered, magistrates were sent to search Mrs Vaux' house at Great Harrowden "most exactly," with orders, if they failed to find him, to set men on guard round the place both night and day at a distance of three miles on every side, and to apprehend all whom they did not know within this radius.

Meantime Father Gerard had been hurried away by Mrs Vaux to a small hiding-hole, cleverly contrived, but not high enough for him to stand upright. Day after day passed by and still the guard was kept. Some of the magistrates, indeed, insisted on remaining in the house itself, and even Mrs Vaux' skilful ruse was at first of no avail. Weary of their presence, she had pretended that she was ready betray all she knew, and taking the Justice in command to one of the other hiding-places, where a few books had been stored away, she said in effect :

"There ! That is all I have to show you."

The good man was much puzzled, for he certainly thought Father Gerard would have been hidden here

if anywhere, but notwithstanding he insisted on remaining there full nine days. Luckily he and his companions slept soundly at night after the heavy meals prepared for them by Mrs Vaux, and so every night food was brought secretly to the priest. He suffered severely from the cold, however, for it was sharp weather near to the Christmas season; and after four or five days they even ventured to bring him out after midnight and to warm him at a good fire.

Meantime the magistrates had met with some success. Two priests who had been staying in the house left hurriedly when they first heard of the trouble, in order to join Father Garnet. Both were taken on their journey and thrown into prison.

A third, Father Laithwaite, had set out a few days before, when the plot had first been heard of, to visit Father Garnet and to get instructions from him. The air was already thick with suspicion, and he was taken on his way to town but escaped in a curious fashion.

His captors took him to an inn, intending to bring him up for examination and committal the next day.

On entering the inn he took off his cloak and sword and laid them on a bench; then on pretence of looking after his horse and getting him taken to water, he went to the stable, and as there was a stream near the house he bade the boy lead the horse thither at once and himself went along also.

When they had come to the stream and the horse was drinking, "Go," said he to the lad, "get ready the hay and the straw for his bed and I will bring him back when he has drunk."

The boy returned to the stable without further thought, and he, mounting his horse, spurred him into the stream and swam him to the opposite bank. Those in the inn, seeing his cloak and sword still lying there, had for some time no suspicion of his stratagem; but hearing from the stable-boy what had happened, they saw they had been outwitted and immediately set off in pursuit. They were, however, too late, for the fugitive, knowing the way well, got to the house of a Catholic before night and lay hid there for a few days. Then, finding that he could not get to Father Garnet, and thinking all danger had passed in his former quarters, he tried to return to Father Gerard.

In this way he fell straight into the clutches of those who were guarding the house of Mrs Vaux, and was dragged by them to London. Strangely enough, they could not prove in any way that he was a priest, and so his brother was able in time to purchase his freedom.

Encouraged by these minor successes, the Justices at length departed from Great Harrowden.

CHAPTER XVI

IN HARBOUR

ALTHOUGH Father Gerard seemed safe for the moment, the hue and cry was still hot, and grew hotter as public opinion became impressed with the belief that he had been privy to the plot.

The fact that he was intimate with most of those concerned in it was the chief thing against him, even after Sir Everard Digby, his special friend and convert, protested in open court that he "never dare mention a syllable of it to the priest because he never would have permitted him to go on with it."

Since a further stay at Great Harrowden might bring Mrs Vaux into serious trouble, the Father came in secret to London, took a house, furnished it with some good hiding-places, and lay there for the whole of the Lent of 1606 before reluctantly deciding to leave England for a time. His courage in the face of imminent peril was still extraordinary.

He did not think of leaving England to avoid being taken; but as in that great disturbance it was no time for labouring but rather for keeping quiet, he would take any favourable opportunity that presented itself of passing over into foreign parts and reposing a little, that after so long a

period of distracting work in all kinds of company he might "open his mouth and draw his breath" and recover strength for future labours. Meantime he had only just taken the new house in town when another **adventure** befell him.

A certain priest, Father Thomas Everett by name, had visited a house in London where some "false brethren," probably servants, guessed that he was a priest and gave notice to the Council. He was a tall man, with dark skin and black hair, and Cecil, the prime mover in all persecution, on hearing him described, at once guessed him to be Father Gerard himself. "Now we shall have him!" said he to a friend, and forthwith sent to have the house searched.

Meantime, however, Father Gerard had heard all that had happened and at once bade the friend, in whose house he himself had been lately concealed, to fetch the priest away and hide him in his own house. This was done, and he lay snug in the priests' hole while his former refuge was being overhauled in vain. It so happened, however, that some of Father Garnet's books had been seen lying about in the house where he was concealed, and this fact brought suspicion upon his host. This house was also well searched, and though Father Everett could not be found, the master and mistress were seized on suspicion and thrown into prison.

When Father Gerard heard this he was much alarmed for the safety of the hidden priest, for, since there were now no Catholics in the house, Father

Everett would either starve to death in his den or come out and be at once apprehended.

So he took the risk of sending two trusty messengers to bring him away, having first described exactly how they were to find him. But they, after they found the place, could not get the priest to answer or to open the entrance of the secret place to them, although they told him they had been sent by Father Gerard. For he not unnaturally suspected this to be a trick on the part of the searchers, who often used to pretend to depart and then return, calling out in friendly tones that all was now safe, for the Justices had gone. In this case, however, his caution was the cause of great difficulty, for the messengers, after waiting longer than was safe, finding that their assurances were quite in vain, returned and promptly fell into the hands of the watch. They were kept in custody that night and only got off with difficulty next day; and one of them being recognised as a Catholic who had lived in the house just taken by Father Gerard, brought that place under immediate suspicion. This man came to the Father and urged him to depart to the house of a friend where he would be very securely hidden, in case they came; but this Father Gerard would not do until he had sent another party, together with the man who made the hiding-place, to Father Everett. For he knew that if he were not released, if necessary by force, he must soon be starved to death.

These men opened the place and carried off the

hidden priest to the house of Father Gerard, the only available place to which they had access at that moment.

Four days later, when all seemed quiet, and Father Everett was saying his Holy Thursday Mass, he had just finished the offertory when "there was great tumult and noise at the garden gate," and the Mayor of London with a band of constables rushed into the house and up the stairs. So quick they were that the Father, "all vested as he was and with all the altar furniture bundled up," had only just entered his hiding-place.

So near a matter was it that the Mayor and his company smelt the smoke of the extinguished candles, so that they made sure a priest had been there, and were the more eager in their search. But of the three hiding-places in that house they did not find one.

After this, when Father Everett had been once again released from his lurking-hole and sent out of London, "seeing that the times were such as called us rather to remain quiet than to gird ourselves for work," Father Gerard unwillingly decided to cross the sea and live for a while in safer lands.

The loyalty of his friends had been truly remarkable, and accounts more than any other human means for his wonderful escapes. While he was still in town Mrs Vaux was brought up before the Council, through the treachery of a relative to whom she had written a private letter asking for the release

of a priest who had just been seized. This wretched man sent her letter to the Council, and when she was brought in they showed it to her, saying :

“ Now you see that you are entirely at the King’s mercy for life or death ; but if you consent to tell us where Father Gerard is you shall have your life.”

“ I do not know where he is,” said she, “ and if I did know I would not tell you.”

Then rose one of the lords who had been a former friend of her to accompany her to the door out of courtesy, and on the way said to her persuasively ; “ Have pity on yourself and on your children and say what is required of you, for otherwise you will certainly die.”

To which she answered with a loud voice : “ Then, my lord, I will die.”

This, however, was only said to frighten her, for after keeping her in custody for some time she was released on condition that she remained in London.

Immediately she was free she set about taking every care of Father Gerard during the time he still remained in London, and when he wished to depart from England it was she who provided the money for his journey.

Six years later we find this woman of splendid and unselfish courage in prison, together with her son, “ because that certain Jesuits were taken at the house of Lord Vaux’ mother.” And a year after this we read in a notice still kept in the archives of the Vatican :

“The persecution of the Catholics continues as usual. . . .

“Lord Vaux remains in prison and is in peril of the penalty called *Præmunire*, which is the loss of his estates and perpetual imprisonment, because he will not take the oath of allegiance, as it is called. The mother of the Baron has already incurred this penalty, and has lost all she has. She still remains in prison.”

One more glimpse we get of this brave lady. When she had been in prison a long time without the consolation of the Sacraments, she begged the Jesuit Fathers to send her some Father who was not known, to hear her confession and give her Communion.

Father Cornforth, one of the bravest and holiest men of that Order, came then to London and accepted this charge, and on St John Baptist's Day went to the prison. They let him enter her cell and complete the Holy Sacrifice, but just as he had given Holy Communion to Mrs Vaux and two others the officers rushed into the cell and laid hands upon him.

The priest turned back to the altar and quietly received the remaining hosts lest they should fall into sacrilegious hands.

The first man who entered the room, seeing the altar well appointed and all of them kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, was astounded; and forgetting the fierceness with which, under similar

circumstances, most people would rush to capture a priest, only uttered these words :

“ Has not your ladyship suffered enough already for this sort of thing ? ”

Father Cornforth was hurried off to Newgate, from whence, though fully expecting his martyrdom, he was presently given a way of escape. Not till 1625 do we find Lord Vaux receiving a pardon from the new king, Charles I., for “ not repairing to the Protestant Church.” His valiant mother, a true confessor, seems to have been kept in prison, or at least under watch and ward, until her death.

It was on that 3rd of May 1606, the day Father Garnet was done to death and won his martyr's crown in St Paul's churchyard, that Father John Gerard crossed the Channel.

Although he had no idea of it at that time, he was never to see England again.

“ Gerard doeth good work,” Father Walpole had written years before, and now that work, as far as his native land was concerned, was over. He slipped over the Channel, with his usual luck, in the suite of “ certain high personages ”—the ambassadors of Spain and Flanders. With him was the faithful Richard Fulwood, heart-broken at the fate of his beloved friend and master, Father Garnet.

Father John himself was in a sorry state of health, and it is no wonder that when once the awful strain of the previous months was relaxed he fell very ill

and was detained for six weeks at St Omers, unable to travel to Rome, whither he had been summoned by Father Parsons. Later on he went on to the Holy City and was sent to Tivoli for his health—a brief period of happy sojourn made happier by the company of Father Parsons and his faithful lay-brother, John Lilly. Then for a time he was appointed English Confessor at St Peter's, Rome, and after his profession, nearly twenty-one years after his entrance into the Society, he became Assistant of the Master of Novices at the Jesuit House at Louvain.

At the end of the year 1614 Father Gerard was given a wider field for his energies. It was found more convenient to transfer the Novice House from Louvain to Liège, where he was made Rector and Master of Novices. For even at Louvain the Father was often in danger of his life, since the Low Countries were full of spies who were trying to stir up antagonism to the English Catholics on behalf of the English Government. So we find Father Gerard writing in characteristic wise :

“ Concerning my wariness in avoiding the eyes of spies, I have been all this year more sparing in that kind than divers friends here did think needful, although some did think it dangerous to go any journey, as doubting I might be killed by the way.”

The fact of his being in Louvain was, indeed, a special cause of complaint made to the Governor of that province by James of England, and was the

chief reason why Father Gerard was transferred to the province of Liège. There he remained as Novice Master for eight years, and indeed the whole foundation was due to his unremitting care and zeal.

In 1622 he was removed to Rome for a time, and then sent back to Belgium as instructor of the young priests who, before taking their last vows, pass a year in what is known as the Third Probation, in Ghent.

Here, where the English Fathers received their preparation for the difficulties and dangers of the English Mission, Father Gerard must often have fought his old battles again; teaching them what to do and what to avoid.

Most interesting to us, however, is an incident of these four years which recalls the name of his former friend and helper, Anne, Countess of Arundel, widow of the martyred Philip, Earl of Arundel.

This noble lady had always been devoted to the Jesuits, and it was by means of her generosity that the foundation at Ghent had been begun and maintained. Yet it seemed as though both almsgiving and prayer were in her case unavailing to bring about the fulfilment of her wish. For her son, Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel and Surrey, that child of many tears, whose martyred father had not even been allowed to look upon his baby face, had almost entirely given up the Faith for which his parent died, and had allowed his two young sons to be brought up as Protestants. This had been

done "partly through fear, partly through desire of favour with the King," and it went nigh to break his mother's heart.

She had ventured to hope that where her own son had been weak and faithless, his heir, James Lord Maltravers, a clever, handsome and witty boy, would have upheld the honour of their ancient house as a Catholic ; but it looked as though that was never to be the case.

It so happened that this lad of eighteen had been travelling with his mother and his brother Henry in Italy, and that on the return journey they decided to visit the beautiful old town of Ghent. He knew nothing of the Jesuit foundation made by his grandmother in that place, for it was even then dangerous to let such things be breathed in England. But the Countess, hearing of his destination, and praying with all her soul that in that spot might be found the answer to her petitions, determined to write to her grandson a letter, to be delivered to him after her own death, in which she desired him, "if he lived to see Catholic times in this kingdom, that he would favour and further the house she had set up at Ghent for the Society, and that he would leave the like over to his children and posterity, hoping that God would bless both him and them the more for it and grant that she might have the more joy of them in heaven with an eternal happiness."

She wrote in simple faith, for it was not likely that James Maltravers, as a Protestant, would

support a Jesuit house, but even as she wrote her prayer was being strangely fulfilled. The lad sickened of the small-pox in the house where they were staying, and one of those who served him, remembering his Catholic ancestry, fetched Father John Gerard for the comforting of his soul.

Brought up a Protestant, taught all his boyhood by a Protestant minister, the boy might well have seemed unpromising material for conversion. But the prayers of his grandmother on earth, and of his blessed grandfather in heaven, together with the Father's persuasion, soon prevailed, and James, Lord Maltravers, became a devout Catholic, and made a good death.

When his grandmother had notice of his conversion and death, instead of lamenting his loss, as parents are wont to do in such cases, she gave God many thanks, rejoicing that he had made so good an end.

For the last ten years of Father Gerard's life this veteran soldier was Confessor to the English College at Rome. His work was therefore to train the souls of the ardent young students of that home of martyrs for their strenuous life and almost certain death in the English Mission. Knowing him as we do by this time, we can imagine how this old man of seventy-three would kindle their hearts and inflame their affections by the burning descriptions of adventures and conversions, of narrow escapes and wonderful mercies vouchsafed during those eighteen years of persecution. We can see them crowd

round to touch those gnarled old hands, distorted with the torture of the Tower; we can hear their joyous laugh at his tales of outwitting magistrate or councillor, and their awed voices as they discussed the details of so many marvellous conversions. They must have been happy years for Father Gerard, in spite of the fact that he knew that twenty-nine brave young priests of this college had already died upon English scaffolds before he began his work in Rome, and that most of those whose bright faces he then looked upon would soon follow in their footsteps of blood. Probably his one regret was that the supreme sacrifice had not been asked of himself.

When this true Confessor of the Faith died, in 1637, it might well have been said of him, as of the saint he most resembled in character and in zeal, that he had fought a good fight and had kept the Faith. Henceforth there was reserved for him a crown of glory in the world to come.

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